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ASHER'S COLLECTION
OF
ENGLISH AUTHORS
BRITISH AND AMERICAN.

~~VOL. 266.~~

SELF-CONDEMNED.

A. Novel

by

Mrs. ALFRED W. HUNT

Author of „The Leaden Casket“.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

I. **II**.

HAMBURG
J. F. RICHTER

1887.

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‘Our acts our angels are, or good or ill,
Our fatal shadows that walk by us still,’
BEAUMONT.

SELF-CONDEMNED.

CHAPTER I.

‘Who ever loved, that loved not at first sight?’

SHAKESPEARE.

‘He never saw, never before to-day,
What was able to take his breath away,
A face to lose youth for, to occupy age
With the dream of, meet death with’—.

R. BROWNING.

‘If ever I marry, that shall be the woman!’

Such was the energetic exclamation which suddenly met the ears of a young man, who had for two hours been lying on a sofa reading Browning’s ‘Dramatis Personæ’ in perfect contentment of body and mind. He looked up, feeling rather cross at the interruption: he saw his friend Lewis Barrington, who, a couple of hours before, had conjured him, for heaven’s sake, to hold his tongue and leave him in peace, or a certain most promising article would assuredly not be finished in time for

that week's *Spectator*—he saw this same man, who was usually sane and sensible, and endowed with a remarkable power of abstracting himself from the life that was going on around him—he saw him standing by the open window, eagerly looking through the sheltering screen of a white muslin curtain at something which was taking place outside.

‘Do come and look at her, Frank!’ again said Barrington.

‘What is it?’ inquired Frank, rather impatiently, for he considered this break in the serenity of the afternoon wholly uncalled for.

Frank Davenport had come to talk to Barrington about a magazine novel of his, which he was illustrating, but Barrington had been too busy to pay any attention to him; so the ill-used artist had taken a book instead, and for some time had been in a state of perfect sympathy with his poet, and did not want to be forced back to common life. If Barrington had got his article written, and had perhaps succeeded rather better with it than he had expected, was that a reason why he should thus disturb the blissful period of self-forgetfulness which his friend was so thoroughly enjoying? There was no occasion whatever for him to unbend his mind in so ridiculous a fashion!

‘Do come and look at her!’ again cried Barrington.

Frank Davenport, on the sofa, pretended not to hear. The other persisted.

‘I won’t,’ said Davenport firmly. ‘You say that you are going to marry her, so why should

I disturb myself now? I shall have opportunities without end of seeing her when you do.'

'You have no idea how much in earnest I am!' returned Barrington. 'I have seen many a beautiful girl in my time, but none worthy of being mentioned in the same breath with this one.'

Somewhat moved by this—for Barrington was a man who had 'eyed full many a woman with best regard,' and Davenport had always been obliged to confess that there was every reason for his so doing—the reluctant youth scrambled to his feet, went to the window, and, side by side with his friend, took his station behind the curtain, which enabled them to pursue their espionage undetected.

Barrington's rooms were in a dull street in Westminster—a short street of dingy-looking, red-brick houses, some divided into offices, others occupied by persons of a certain position and wealth. Davenport had looked out of that window a thousand times, but had never seen anything to tempt him to look twice. To-day was different.

Standing on the steps of the house immediately opposite, was a girl of eighteen or nineteen. The sun was shining down on her, yet she stood unbonneted and undaunted in the full blaze of its splendour. It sparkled amongst her soft golden hair, which was drawn carelessly back in wavy masses from a very white forehead. It heightened the warm colour in her cheeks, already perhaps somewhat heightened by the boldness of her undertaking—not that she showed any nervousness or haste; on the contrary, she stood there in absolute

confidence that whatever she did would be found right—and her eyes, whose colour could but be guessed at as blue, showed no alarm, but were brimming over with health, happiness, and perfect security in these and all other good gifts being hers for ever. Her nose was straight and well-formed, with a slight arch in it, which betokened strength of will; her mouth and teeth were lovely; but almost the prettiest part of her face was her chin, which was finely modelled, and showed the two dimples which are said to be beauty's last perfecting touches.

Pretty as she was, she did not look as if she ever thought of her beauty, or of what impression she might be making on others. There she stood, on the cold grey steps, innocently unconscious that she was flying in the face of the established proprieties of life, and so thoroughly absorbed in the pleasure of what she was doing, that no other thought could find place in her mind.

Davenport was a figure-painter, and quick to see every detail which made up the picture before him. Nothing escaped his eye, from the texture of her dress, which he did not like, to the pale pink coral necklace she wore round her throat, and the old-fashioned silver buckle which fastened her belt; and yet he would have assured you that he had never bestowed a glance on these things, and had scarcely even observed the crowd of children which was clustering about her, because the girl herself was such a beauty! What she was doing was this:

Princess Margaret Street, being narrow, was not much of a thoroughfare, and sometimes in the afternoon it was haunted by small children, some venturing to play with their tops or marbles, others tottering under the weight of extremely heavy baby brothers and sisters. The young lady on the steps appeared to have been suddenly inspired with a wish to make their eyes brighten with unexpected pleasure; for she had come out with a large dish of strawberries, and, with her own pretty fingers, was giving each child one in turn. Her dish was all but empty when Davenport condescended to go to the window; but he saw her at the top of the steps, and the children flocking round her, smiling their thanks as they received the bright fruit, craning their necks to peer through the open doorway behind her into a house which produced such wonders, or simply stuffing the delightful windfall into their mouths, and staring fixedly at the good genius who had bestowed it. She showed great impartiality in her gifts. Each child had its strawberry, and then the round began again—a calculation somewhat impeded, however, by fresh arrivals.

‘She really is an uncommonly pretty little thing!’ exclaimed Davenport.

‘A pretty little thing!’ echoed Barrington contemptuously. ‘Is that all you can find to say? She is not a little thing at all; and “pretty”! She is smiling now; but look what determination,—what character there is in her face! She is divine, I tell you—magnificent and lovely at the same time! What a noble figure, too! and did you see her a

minute ago, when she was waiting for that brat with a sack-like lump of a baby to go to her? She stood tapping the edge of the step with her foot; and, by Jove! it was the shapeliest little foot I ever beheld in my life! She is very clever about distributing her strawberries fairly: she seems to know exactly which of the children has had one, and which not. Look! that unfortunate child can't get up the steps to her!

A child on crutches had come to the foot of the steps: she was a late arrival. Quick as thought the fair maiden above saw her, ran down the five or six wide steps which parted her from the perilous publicity of the street, and picking out the finest strawberry in her dish, put it into the lame girl's mouth.

The latter, a pale, sickly child of eleven or twelve, stood staring wistfully at the bright apparition before her; she had often seen great ladies roll by her in their carriages, looking rich, well-dressed, and beautiful, but she did not know that any of these splendid creatures ever spoke to poor little children like herself—much less fed them with their own hands. Was she perhaps dreaming now?

The lame girl's eyes were so expressive, that there was no difficulty in seeing what was in her mind. She did not thank her benefactress, but stood transfixed with astonishment and admiration. The object of her worship seemed to understand her thoughts, smiled, said a few kind words to her, and, finding that she had only half a dozen more strawberries in the dish, glanced round

appealingly at the children, who had each had five or six, and said something which was probably to the effect that the last comer, being so lame, ought to have them all; after which, with an air of extreme decision, and a very kind smile, she popped them one by one into her mouth.

‘I wonder how she will retreat,’ said Davenport.

That was soon seen. She held up the dish—a choice old blue china one, with its pattern all blurred with pink stains—she considered its emptiness with an air of semi-comical dismay—waved her white hand, with its strawberry-stained finger-tips, and ran in.

Barrington stood for some minutes watching the house in silence. There was now nothing in its appearance to make it at all different from any of the other houses before him. All alike were as uninteresting as an equal amount of dead brick wall would have been. Then he said:

‘Now I feel the truth of Wordsworth’s lines—

“All Paradise
Could, by the simple opening of a door,
Let itself in on him.”’

‘Nonsense!’ exclaimed Davenport.

He thought it was time for the voice of reason to interpose.

‘It’s not nonsense! I tell you I intend to marry that girl!’

‘I quite understand that a man can fall in love with any girl who is as pretty as that, and want to marry her—that’s not why I said “Nonsense!”—but I do call it very absurd to fall in love with a girl who has no idea how to dress

herself! I'd never speak to Nancy again—at least, I'd be very much inclined not to do so—if she came down dressed in a sparkling garment like that! A silk! A thing that won't hang in good folds! Barrington, did you—did you see it?

'Yes; I liked it.'

'That's how she would drag you down, then! Her dress had all the ugly sameness of a large sheet of water in full light, or a big looking-glass with the sun shining on it! Come home with me, and I'll show you a gorgeous dress—one I bought yesterday for Nancy. She is cross, for she says she wanted to do something else with the money; but I should never have had such a splendid chance again, so I don't repent. It is silk of the most exquisite colour! I forget its Indian name; but "Ripples of Silver" is what it means in English. I'd have bought it just for the sake of its name, even if I had not liked it for itself! And you should have seen the muslins that were offered to me! With such names, too! I couldn't quite buy everything; but the names are a delight in themselves: "Woven Air," "Evening Dew," "Running Water;" and the dresses were as delicate and beautiful as their names. I had to run out of the shop, or I mus't have bought every one of them! Barrington, I don't believe you have heard a word of what I've been saying?'

'I am almost afraid I have not heard quite all,' replied Barrington penitently. 'I was thinking of something else.'

He had not heard a word, but had been thinking that if this girl really did live opposite,

he would see her again—might possibly see her twice or thrice daily. Then he strode across the room to some rather untidy bookshelves, and laid hold of a battered copy of the 'Court Guide,' to see if he could discover her name.

'Fifteen is the number,' volunteered Davenport, in a fit of sudden and amiable sympathy.

'As if I didn't know that!' growled Barrington. '15, Princess Margaret Street, Westminster. Cornelius Carey; and he has a house in Scotland, too!'

'Cornelius Carey! That's the Carey who belongs to Hackblock, Higgins, and Hackblock!'

'I am sure it isn't!' exclaimed Barrington who could not believe that there was any taint of trade about the peerless maiden in the house over the way.

'Why should you be so sure? By Jove, I can tell you that, so far as money is concerned, it's a mighty fine thing to belong to that firm! The Hackblocks are all as rich as Jews! I wish to goodness they would take me into partnership, and not expect me to do anything but draw the profits; or, perhaps, paint them a good flare-up of an advertisement now and then.'

'What are they?'

'Big blacking-makers. Celebrated ones, mind you! Their names shine over the whole world with the effulgence of their own material,' said Frank. 'It must be a bore, though, to have to get all your effects out of one colour!'

'Black isn't a colour; and you ought to know that!'

‘What are you going to do to-night?’

‘Dine at the Wiltons’, and think of my great discovery.’

‘Now that that pretty girl of yours has gone in, couldn’t we get through our business?’

‘It is too late to begin now; besides, I have that bit of writing to finish.’

‘I thought it was finished. What is it all about?’

‘The wickedness of keeping sentinels on duty, hour after hour in severe weather, when they——’

‘Why on earth should you write about a thing like that? We ought to have sentinels—their dress is picturesque!—and the idea of their being there in all weather, and at every hour, is impressive! It is a thousand times better to preserve a picturesque grievance than to bring about a dull bit of paternal legislation. Barrington, you surprise me, I certainly did not expect you to take the commonplace inartistic side of a question. Alter your wording a little, and use your brains on the right side. You won’t—and you won’t see about those illustrations? then I’ll go back to Nancy. Stop, let me just have a look at myself first.’

So saying, Davenport strolled to the mirror over the mantelpiece and twisted his long, light-brown hair into some arrangement he thought more becoming.

‘How long you let your hair grow!’ observed Barrington. ‘They say one ought never to trust anyone with long hair.’

‘My tradesmen seem to have a great objec-

tion to trusting me,' replied Davenport calmly. 'They are wrong, though; they all get paid some day. Nancy sees to that.'

His hair really was very long, and immensely thick; it was of a warm brown, and without a trace of curliness. He was a good-looking fellow, with a somewhat massive oval face, large, fine, but rather immobile features, blue eyes, and almost womanly delicacy of complexion. He was tall, and could easily see himself above his friend's goodly row of blue china plates and vases; but he was not so much admiring himself as a wonderful Liberty handkerchief, which might with equal propriety have been described as pink, red, or amber. Davenport was just going to ask Barrington whether, on calm deliberation, he would call it peach, or apricot colour, when he saw that his friend had betaken himself to his writing again, and was now working against time; so hurriedly saying, 'I'll come back to-morrow, or next day,' he departed and soon afterwards Barrington began to dress for dinner.

He went to the Wiltons', but found their party dull; and left early, on the plea that he had 'a lot of writing to do before day dawned.' He was known to be a literary man, so his excuse seemed to be a valid one; but he sauntered home by moonlight, recalling in imagination the face and figure which had made such an impression on him. When he entered his own street, he found it crowded with carriages; and when he looked at the Careys' house, he saw that it had undergone a transformation since he went out. An awning

now shaded the steps on which his fair maiden of the strawberries had so lately stood, light streamed from the windows, and the door was open to receive a number of guests who were doing their best to approach. This they could not do quickly, the street being narrow, and the number of carriages large. One by one these succeeded in reaching the door and depositing their freight of pleasure-seekers; and now that he knew where they were going, Barrington could not resist the inclination to stay where he was, and survey the faces of those who were about to enjoy a delight for the sake of which he would readily have foregone all the delights which were likely to fall to his own lot during the course of the next twelve months.

The Careys had on the whole a creditable set of friends. He scanned their appearance narrowly, and, to do so the better, he crossed the street and walked to the other end of it, inspecting each carriage as it passed him by. Just as he was turning back, still full of vexation at being debarred from the enjoyment of what he could have enjoyed so much, he heard a voice near him say, 'Mr. Barrington! Mr. Barrington!' and turning quickly he saw Mrs. Dalrymple, a great friend of his, struggling to push down the window of her carriage to speak to him.

'Isn't this dreadful?' said she. 'What a block there is! I am afraid I shall have to spend the evening here in the street! I am on my way to the Careys—so are you, I suppose?'

'No, I am not. I don't know them. Tell

me something about these Careys. I am suddenly interested in them.'

'Had you not better come into the carriage, then?' said she, 'and I will tell you what I know about them. I am so glad I saw you: where shall I begin?'

'At the beginning—the very beginning.'

'At the very beginning, then, Mr. Carey had not a shilling in the world.'

'May I make as good an ending!' said Barrington devoutly.

'Only the worst is, I am not able to tell you how to do it. I myself don't quite know how he became so rich—except that the Higginses and Hackblocks took him as their partner. He came from the North, and they say he was an office-boy at first, and then a clerk, and after that they made him a partner. Fancy, Mr. Barrington, he is actually a partner in that firm!'

To Barrington this did not represent quite so much as perhaps it ought to have done, but as Mrs. Dalrymple spoke in an awe-struck manner, he felt it right to be awe-struck too, and exclaimed earnestly, 'Is he really?'

'He really is, and as rich as a man can be! He married a friend of mine, so that's how I know so much about him. They have one daughter.'

'A—h!' said Barrington, breathing a long-drawn sigh of relief.

'Oh, of course, I knew that you were only asking all these questions about him because you had seen his daughter. Young men *are* like that! Well, she is rather pretty, I must admit it.'

'She is beautiful!—no, that is not half strong enough—nothing is strong enough! It's not her face so much—it is everything!'

'Yes, she is not at all bad-looking,' said Mrs. Dalrymple calmly. 'She is an only child, and they idolize her. Mrs. Carey is a great invalid, and lies on the sofa all day with a bottle of smelling-salts in her hand. She worships this child, and Mr. Carey, who is much older than his wife, worships her too. She has never known what it is to have "No" said to her; and as for her father and mother, they are only too grateful when she expresses a wish for anything.'

'Not very good for her,' observed Barrington, 'or for her future husband.'

'No indeed it is not—I often say so; but she is not much hurt by it. She says and does exactly what she likes, but her desires happen to run in a tolerably safe direction. Oh, how slowly we do get on! I've a great mind to give it up.'

'Don't do that. We are moving—but to return to what we were just saying, if they let her have so much of her own way now, won't that make it difficult for them to control her when she—well, when she begins to lose her heart? She might want to marry a poor man, or some other objectionable person.'

'Oh no! Besides, that's all settled.'

'Settled?' exclaimed Barrington, in much dismay.

'Yes, to the entire satisfaction of all her family—you know what that means, I dare say. She is going to marry a very rich man—young Hackblock, in fact,—the only son of the head of the

firm. It has been the dearest wish of her family for months, but she could not be brought to the point; now she has accepted him, and this very party I am going to is given in honour of the engagement. You know he will be a millionaire, or half one perhaps—but here we are, at last! Where are you going, by-the-bye?’

‘I? Home; there, that’s where I live,’ said he, pointing to the house opposite.

‘Well, good-bye; I am so glad I happened to see you. You have helped me to tide over a very dull tract of time.’

He handed her out of the carriage; then just as she was leaving him, he said, ‘I wish you would take me in with you. Couldn’t I go as a friend of yours?’

‘Of course you could. Do come, if you have a little time to spare. I am intimate with the Careys, so there is no difficulty whatever about it.’

CHAPTER II.

Hear my soul speak;
The very instant that I saw you, did
My heart fly to your service.

Tempest.

THE thought must have occurred to everyone that if we had only our old schoolfellows to deal with in the battle of life, the said battle would be much easier, by reason of the perfect knowledge we should possess of all the combatants

characters. The man must be foolish indeed who can be deceived by a school or college companion. Who can ever forget the mental as well as the bodily features of the first human being of his own level of age and experience, who 'licked' him in school, or out of it. Our boyish estimate of character, and our forecast of many a brilliant youth's career, may prove to be not quite right. Certainly it would not do to lose sight of the softening influence of time, place, and circumstance—it is strange, for instance, to hear of an archbishop having been fined when a member of the Oxford Union for disorderly conduct—but as a rule, if we could get to know what was thought of a man by his own set when he was an undergraduate, we should have a rough sketch, which would require very little filling in with a few facts of after-life, to serve as a perfect guide to us in our dealings with him. Nevertheless, there are some men who are a little more difficult to read from the very beginning than others—and of such men Lewis Barrington was one. 'Not a bad fellow, Barrington, I believe; but I could not make him out a bit at Balliol, and he has puzzled me ever since;' or, 'Not thoroughly popular, you know, but a man of first-rate ability,' would have been the summing up of our hero's character by nine out of ten of his old comrades at the Oxford and Cambridge Club.

'Time he made up his mind what he really intends to go in for,' would probably have expressed the practical view of his fortunes at the present time, which was taken in the same quarter.

Lewis Barrington was living by his wits, and he did not fare badly; for his wits were of admirable quality, and had not wanted any advantage of training or circumstance. His father had been a leader-writer on the staff of our greatest journal. He had just lived long enough to be gladdened by his son's success at college; and that success, of an only son, was the one thing which had brightened his life since his wife's death. He had lived extravagantly, and left his son little in the way of material aid, except a large circle of influential friends.

Lewis Barrington had qualified himself as a barrister; but, so far, had not shown sufficient devotion to the study of law to justify his warmest admirer in connecting his name ever so faintly with the chancellorship. But he had an assured footing on one of the leading journals—had written one play, at least, which was spoken of as a great success; and published a volume of essays, with the enigmatical title of 'The open Secret,' which showed no little wit, and even some power of thinking. He had a very handsome face—a face with sufficient refinement in its strength to admit of his having been picked out to play the part of Cassandra, when the college was bent on acting a Greek play; and he had a well-knit figure, which enabled him to win a hurdle-race in the college sports of the same year. Of course, with his considerable gifts, he was a social favourite; but those who knew him best declared that there were strange veins of contradictoriness and impulsiveness in his character, which made it

impossible to forecast his career. Nay, that at times there were signs of a disposition to flout society altogether, and leave the beaten tracks, which led to worldly success, simply because they were beaten.

Meanwhile, he was working hard enough; and, like most literary men, lived a life which was made up of the extremes of solitary work and social excitement. It was therefore a very common proceeding for Lewis Barrington to go to two or three parties on the same night. He had left the Wiltons early; but it was not far from midnight when he ascended the stairs of No. 15, Princess Margaret Street. A spacious staircase it was, covered with heavy Turkey carpets, and beset with flowering shrubs, hothouse-flowers, crowds of guests, and relays of servants.

Barrington was accustomed to lordly houses, but had had no idea that No. 15, with its unpretending exterior, was of more imposing dimensions within than any of the houses on each side of it; or even than humble No. 28, on the opposite side of the street, in which he himself found a shelter. He expressed his surprise to Mrs. Dalrymple, who said:

‘Mr. Carey likes building: there is a little ground at the back of this house, and he has used it to add room to room, so that his wife might not have to go up and down stairs, until the place is immense—for London, I mean. He has a charming place in Scotland, too. Poor man! he took it to please his wife, and now she is not well enough to travel so far; and, somehow or other,

he can't get rid of it. We are going there this autumn; he has lent it to us.'

'Introduce me to Miss Carey, if you can,' whispered Barrington, as they approached the reception-rooms.

'Yes; but don't forget that this party is expressly given to announce her engagement to Mr. Hackblock!'

'Oh, you need not remind me of that! Besides, she would never waste a thought on a poor devil like me!'

He said this in a hurried whisper; for within the doorway he saw her standing by her father's side, helping him to receive his guests, while hovering near her was a thick-set young gentleman, who looked more at home than Barrington cared to see; and was, as he verily believed, no other than the hated Hackblock.

What a treasure of a friend Mrs. Dalrymple was! In a most audible *sotto voce*, he heard her describing himself as a very great friend of hers — a friend of whom she was tremendously proud. Wonderfully clever! Safe to make a splendid figure some day in the House! Her husband, who was unluckily detained there at that very time by his duties, and thus obliged to lose their most delightful party, always said so—everybody was convinced of it; and had Mr. Carey read 'The Open Secret?' That was one of Mr. Barrington's books—it was his last.

On this Mr. Carey, a tall, stout, and extremely pleasant-looking old gentleman, suddenly became quite effusive, and said that 'The Open

'Secret' was a book he delighted in; it had made more impression on him than any book he had read for years!

Hereupon the two gentlemen bowed profoundly to each other; and when the somewhat bald head of Mr. Carey once more rose erect, and the slight redness which had overspread his face from stooping had vanished, he warmly exclaimed:

'Mr. Barrington, allow me to introduce you to my daughter; she has read your book, too. Katherine dear, you have read "The Open Secret?"—I know you have. It is by Mr. Barrington. Tell him how much we liked it.'

Miss Carey bowed and smiled; but made no attempt to sound the praises of 'The Open Secret.' Instead of that, she looked up in some awe at the face of the author, and murmured some words which he could not hear; but the sight of her was enough for him. She wore an ivory-coloured silk dress, and some crimson roses; and somehow, for ever after, their scent intermingled itself with the thought of her. He could not have believed it possible for her to look more beautiful than she had done in the morning; but she did. There was a softness and sweetness in her eyes that was delicious! Was it—no! he would not for a moment allow himself to believe that any part of this charm was due to the presence of Mr. Hackblock. She spoke. It was only some commonplace remark about the weather.

Barrington felt as if he would like nothing better than to talk to her about the weather for ever. He could not, however, pursue even this

harmless subject in peace, for people would come and speak to her every moment. One old gentleman, who had apparently just arrived, congratulated her on her approaching marriage with much kindness. Barrington saw her blush, until her face was almost the colour of her own roses.

‘Introduce me to Mr. Roger, I beg of you, my dear,’ continued this persevering friend. ‘I take the very warmest interest in him already.’

‘That’s more than I do,’ thought Barrington. ‘I can see that he is an odious prig!’

For one moment he hoped that Miss Carey was going to stay by his side, for she evidently did not care to perform the introduction herself.

‘Papa will do that,’ said she; and then she watched papa and her zealous friend traverse together the yard of space which divided them from the hero of the evening, Hackblock.

Almost directly afterwards, however, she joined them, and Barrington lost his opportunity of saying more to her. He could not even have the pleasure of watching her, for a movement among the by-standers cut him off from the least sight of her. He withdrew into a corner, and began to make careful notes of all he saw around.

The people were strangers to him, so there was no fear of being interrupted. He was glad of this, for though he wanted to improve his acquaintance with Miss Carey, he was especially anxious to learn as much of her and her family as

could be gathered from a careful inspection of her surroundings.

Of these, Mr. Hackblock himself was the most interesting; but as he, too, was lost to sight for the moment, Barrington contented himself with studying the people, pictures, and furniture. The people were neither literary nor artistic; neither were they aristocrats. They seemed to him to be, for the most part, city folks, and all as rich as money could make them. The pictures looked as if they had been well chosen from third-rate exhibitions. The furniture was quietly handsome. It was manifest that either Mr. or Mrs. Carey had a certain amount of good taste. It was not that there was anything really good in the room, but that there was nothing strikingly bad; and when a buyer has unlimited money at his disposal, that is saying a great deal.

Having made up his mind on these points, Barrington changed his place a little, to see if he could not find one which commanded a view of Mr. Hackblock.

What had the hateful Hackblock done to deserve the hand of the prettiest girl in London? Barrington put this question to himself again, as he gazed at the stolid youth who stood there looking so thoroughly commonplace and so entirely self-satisfied. He was of the middle height, and of powerful frame. His neck was short, his head somewhat square and massive, being flat at the top, and covered with an abundant growth of dull-brown hair. His forehead was not ill-formed, but rather too low. His nose, a large and bony

one, was slightly flattened at the end; his eyes were of a cold unspeculative, unkindly blue-grey; his mouth coarse and devoid of character; his teeth good, but rather equine, and yet, with all these drawbacks, he was not altogether ill-looking. So far as concerned his character, the impression derived from a study of his face was that he was doggedly obstinate, but for the most part about trifles; that he was one who would be content to dwell in decencies for ever, and not content unless all who belonged to him did the same; that during the whole course of his life, which would probably be a long one, he would not only never originate an idea, but would be perfectly satisfied to adopt as his the most commonplace ideas of the most commonplace people around him; in other words, would go through life avoiding originality as he avoided poison or bankruptcy; that he was one who would stoutly maintain that the dividing lines between genius and lunacy were so faint as to be practically non-existent—in short, he was one of the great army of Philistines!

Could this bright and beautiful Katherine Carey admire a character of this kind, and even be one of the same mould? Barrington looked at her in utter dismay. Her face gave the lie to this mental accusation; but it required no denial—he had never believed it. As yet, however, he only knew her as a very lovely girl whom he had seen gracefully performing a kind action; but a very commonplace girl might have bethought herself that if strawberries tasted nice to rich

girls, they would probably taste nice to poor girls also, if the latter could but have the chance of forming an opinion on the subject.

Of one thing he was quite certain as he looked at Mr. Hackblock, who was still standing near him; and that was, that if ever Katherine Carey took it into her head that it would be a pleasure to stand at the Hackblock front-door and distribute a dish of sovereigns to a group of needy outsiders, Mr. Hackblock, her husband, would promptly interfere. Money was a thing which he did understand. You could see, touch, and handle it; it could procure everything which the heart of man could desire, and was to be valued accordingly. He himself looked built up of money, as he stood there so erect, and so at ease. When he gave away any of that desirable commodity, it would be given in respectable, five, ten, or twenty-pound notes to recognized charities worthy of such support; and having done that, he would cross off the item charity from his record of expenditure until the year following, and not give another thought to the needs or sorrows of suffering humanity, until the time came for signing the annual cheques.

Barrington watched him talking to one or two persons near him. There was too much noise to be able to catch much of the conversation, but it was easy to see that Mr. Hackblock himself attached considerable value to his own speeches. They were evidently the utterances of a man who had a formed opinion on every subject, and who would go through life without feeling one doubt or anxiety on any great question. The wisdom

of the many—of the well-to-do many, of course—was his wisdom; there was no other. Persons who tried to upset established ways of thought—who started doubts likely to make others uncomfortable—were either madmen who ought to be shut up in asylums, or knaves who ought to be transported.

The only doubt which would ever give Roger Hackblock a moment's anxiety, would be whether this or that firm which had given Hackblock and Co. an order, was or was not trustworthy; and whether this or that promising investment was absolutely safe? The tenour of his life could be foreseen with perfect exactness. He would live and die a hard, calculating, obstinate, money-making machine. He would spend his life in adding to the large fortune with which he began it; he would be just, but not more than just; and sometimes so just that, viewed by a higher law, his justice would be cruel injustice. He would succeed in going out of the world leaving more money behind him than his father would leave when he died; but he would depart poor in all but money—with every higher aspiration starved to death for want of nourishment.

Was Katherine Carey to starve with him? Was she a girl who would care to live the life this man would offer her? Barrington might have pursued this train of thought much longer, had he not suddenly remembered, with some vexation, that he was wasting all his evening in forming speculations as to the character of Mr. Hackblock, and possibly losing his only chance of getting to

know Miss Carey. Up to the present time he had, however, had no chance of approaching her, for she had been continually surrounded by friends. Now he saw an opportunity for saying a word or two. She was sitting on a sofa in a corner, and a lady to whom she had been talking for some time was just leaving the seat by her side.

He adroitly secured the place. Miss Carey smiled, and said:

‘Mr. Barrington, when papa told me I was to tell you how much I liked your book, I did not feel as if I could; but I want you to know that my mother was delighted with it—quite delighted! You don’t know how jealous I was of you when I saw how much pleasure you had given her! I’d give anything to have the power of doing something she would like half so well.’

‘Don’t think me ungrateful for your pretty speech if I say that I am quite sure if you only walk through her room without speaking at all, you probably give her more pleasure than the best book imaginable could do.’

‘How do you know that, Mr. Barrington?’ she inquired naïvely.

He smiled at her ingenuous admission that he was right. She continued:

‘You are quite right! She is awfully fond of me; but then, I am awfully fond of her. She is a great invalid, and has to lie on the sofa all day long. Think how dull that must be! She has very few pleasures.’

Before Barrington could speak, the impetuous and impulsive young lady said hurriedly:

‘When some of these people have gone, you might help me to give her a very great one.’

‘A very great one!’ he repeated, wondering much what she was about to say.

‘Yes; “a very great one”—a great pleasure! Is my style bad? You are an author, so I ought to be particular.’

‘Oh, pray excuse me!’ said Barrington. ‘You say that I can give your mother a very great pleasure; I should be delighted if I could. What is it? I hope it is in my power.’

‘It is quite in your power—it is easy; it really would delight her. I’ll tell you what it is. Will you—after a while, you know, when there are not so many people here to miss us—will you go with me into her sitting-room? She would so like to see you; she always likes to see people whose books she admires.’

‘But won’t you be missed if you go away?’ said Barrington prudently, remembering that she might be scolded by the powers that were, if she did this.

‘Never mind if I am, if we give my mother a pleasure. I care far more for her than for all these people!’

He wondered what he was to understand by this. Was she including the Hackblock family amongst those she spoke of as ‘these people’?

She saw that he was doubtful about something, and said:

‘I shall not be missed—no one will notice that I am not here; and if they do, I can’t help it! We must go; I may never again have the chance of introducing you to her!’

He looked at her with eyes which so plainly declared that he meant to see more of her, that if she had happened to be looking at him, even she, unconscious as she was, must have seen it. A minute afterwards she did look up, and exclaimed:

‘Mr. Barrington, I can’t help thinking that I have seen you somewhere before; where can I have done so?’

He smiled, and said:

‘Perhaps in Princess Margaret Street; I live exactly opposite to you.’

‘Really?’ she said incredulously,

‘Yes, really. You may have seen me leaving my own door.’

‘Perhaps, but I don’t think so, for I am hardly ever at that side of the house; I seldom go into any of those rooms. I stay in my own, or my mother’s, and they all look out the other way.’

‘You may have seen me when you were going out.’

‘Oh, when I go out, unless it is in the carriage, I always go by a back way we have, which takes me into the park almost directly!’

‘Then you never go to the front door?’

There was so much significance in his tone that she observed it, and looked at him with a pretty glance of surprise. He added:

‘I saw you there this afternoon.’

‘Giving the children strawberries.’

‘Yes. I thought it so kind of you.’

‘I did get so scolded about that!’

‘Indeed? I imagined that you were a young lady who had all her own way.’

‘So I have; but I am beginning not to have quite so much. Mama said it was odd; and that no one else living in the street ever did such a thing!’

‘That was not a very bad scolding!’

‘From her it was. She never gives bad scoldings; but then some one else began.’

‘Your father?’

‘Oh dear no! If my father thought that it would please me to give the street-children strawberries, he would be sure to order a ton of them from Convent Garden that I might have enough. It was not father—it was a friend of ours.’

Barrington was quite certain that she meant Mr. Hackblock; but, of course, dared not assume that she did so, and had to content himself with asking what the friend said.

‘That nobody did it,’ replied Miss Carey simply.

‘But that was only what your mother said!’

‘So I told him.’

‘And what did he reply to that?’

‘Oh! he explained to me that a thing was not the less worth saying because two people had said it; but the more, because it proved that there was twice as much truth in it.’

‘Then what the congregation says is worth more than what the clergyman says?’

‘Oh, beautiful!’ cried she. ‘I’ll confute him with that! That’s just the kind of argument that will do it. I know he is quite right about it,’

she added gently; 'I am certain of that; only I do so like to do whatever comes into my head.'

Barrington was not satisfied with this return to allegiance to Mr. Hackblock. He tried to draw her on to say more, by adding:

'I don't think your scolding was very severe; was that all?'

'Yes, I think so. No, it was not very bad; but a little scolding seems very frightful when it comes from a person who is very clever. I really believe this one knows everything. He quite frightens me, he is so clever; but I like it. Are you clever, Mr. Barrington—clever about botany—I mean at this particular moment, for I know you are clever? Do you know that a strawberry is not a fruit?'

'Not a fruit! Why, if it is not a fruit, what is it?'

'Ah, you are as ignorant as I am! That's just what I said when I was told that I was not to think that I had been giving those children fruit when I gave them strawberries, and that it was quite wrong to use the word; for all that part which tasted so nice, and looked so red and ripe, was not fruit at all, but only the pulpy receptacle of a lot of small seeds, and the seeds were really the fruit.'

Barrington laughed gaily, and asked what she thought about that.

'I don't know what to think, and perhaps my thoughts don't matter, for they won't alter my feelings. You see, it is the "pulpy receptacle"

which tastes nice. I wish I knew half a quarter as much as he does, though.'

After a little more conversation, much interrupted by having to speak to others, she looked round and said:

'I really think we might now venture go to mother. Give me your arm as if you were taking me to another room, which, by the way, you are doing; and, when once we are outside, we will go to her as quickly as we can.'

They crossed the room; but, just as they reached the door, had to pass Mr. Hackblock. He looked as affectionately in the face of his betrothed as it was in his nature to do, and Barrington had to witness the happy smile she gave him in return. Then they went out on to the wide landing of the stairs, where she opened a green-baize door, and, with Barrington, passed into a long corridor, lighted by a row of small lamps.

'Mother's room is ever so far off!' said she; 'she can't bear noise. She is quite away from the rest of the house—about as far off as one station on the Metropolitan.'

'Let us walk slowly, then, or we shall be tired before we reach the end of our journey.'

'Oh no, let us go as quickly as we can, for I know she will be so glad to see us.'

At the end of the corridor was another green-baize door shielding a door of more substantial make. Here Miss Carey paused and said, 'I will go first and prepare her for your visit. Do you mind waiting a minute?' She swiftly but

noiselessly opened the door and passed out of sight, leaving him in that corridor which was undiversified by anything more grateful to the eye than a long length of Brussels carpet, so much sap-green wallpaper, and half a dozen small lamps on brackets. He had just time to tell himself that the more he saw of Miss Carey, the more he liked and admired her, and the more determined he was not to give up hope for ever, merely because she had just taken it into her head to think she cared for some one else. He had just time to assure himself that Mr. Hackblock could have nothing to recommend him but his money, and that there was no need of more money in a house like that, before he heard her returning footsteps. He opened the green-baize door for her, and thought she looked wonderfully charming as, framed by the dark doorway, she stood with a pleased smile on her lips.

‘Come,’ said she, and he almost fancied that she was holding out her hand in a frank little absent-minded manner to lead him in. He dared not take advantage of this gesture, which was probably perfectly involuntary on her part. When the last fragment of passage had been traversed, and Barrington entered the room beyond, he expected in some quiet corner of it to see a worn invalid with scarcely strength enough to smile a welcome. To some extent he was not deceived in his expectation. Mrs. Carey was extremely delicate-looking and fragile, but her appearance was so youthful that it seemed almost incredible that she was the mother of the blooming girl who

had brought him thither. Her milk-white complexion, her languid eye, and wasted cheek, all told of years of suffering; nevertheless, she was beautiful, and even more beautiful than her daughter. She was thin, but there were no hard lines in her face—no signs of impatience or discontent. Her expression was sweet, thoughtful, and so exquisitely refined and noble, that it was almost impossible to see her without being spiritually the better for the sight. When Barrington bowed down before her it was mentally, as well as actually. She was like some of the saints of the old picture galleries, who being dead yet speak. He took a place by her sofa. A table covered with books, papers, and work was near her; she was evidently not an idle invalid.

‘My dear mother does not quite deserve the pleasure of seeing you, Mr. Barrington,’ said Miss Carey. ‘Don’t you think it is time for a delicate lady like her to be in bed?’

It was very late, and Barrington himself thought that there was a great deal of truth in this remark.

‘Dear child,’ said Mr. Carey, ‘I can sleep here if I am inclined. I get dreadfully tired of bed. I like to look about me a little while I can. Mr. Barrington, we none of us get enough out of this world—one half of our lives is spent in sleep, and the other, or at least a great part of it, in discontented weariness. I like to lose no pleasure that I might keep. To-night, by sending my maid to bed, and waiting a little myself for the chance of seeing my daughter, I have

seen you as well, and I have so often wished to do that.'

She then spoke with great admiration of 'The Open Secret,' but though grateful to it for having procured him this opportunity of seeing her, Barrington was too honest to listen to her praise without much humble qualification of it. 'The Open Secret,' as he well knew, was a fairly good but not a great work. There was, however, no persuading Mrs. Carey of this, and he gave up the attempt.

'Before you go, Mr. Barrington,' said she, after a while, 'do look at my little Turner. My dear husband bought it for me, and it is such a pleasure to me. Take the lamp, and look at it. I hope you will see it by daylight soon, but do look at it now.'

He took the lamp, and went to a splendid bit of Turner's water-colour work. At another time he would have been quite absorbed in the delight of seeing it, but something else attracted him more now; for as soon as he had left her, Mrs. Carey had turned to her daughter, and said in a voice which would have been inaudible to almost any ears but his, 'Dear Katherine, have you been happy to-night? Has he been nice?'

'He,' of course, was Hackblock. Barrington tried hard to think it was himself, but could not.

'Immensely happy, mother! Far happier than I expected to be. After all, it is just as well to be engaged. I like people to make a fuss about me—in a new way, I mean. You all treated me like a child before.'

'I was sure you would be happy,' said Mrs. Carey; then she said to Barrington, 'Isn't it fine? There is so much poetry in it.'

'It is beautiful! I should so like to see it by daylight.' For, in spite of Miss Carey's words, he could not help wishing to come again.

'I shall be delighted to see you. I was just going to ask you to come and have tea with me—come any afternoon you like.'

While Mrs. Carey was giving this invitation to Barrington, Miss Carey was playing with a ring on her finger. She was sitting with head bent down, apparently oblivious of all else but what she was doing. She was gazing intently on this ring—sometimes at the flashing stones, sometimes at the plain gold of its hoop.

'It is *the* ring!' thought Barrington—'the engaged ring! And she is turning it round to see how a wedding-ring will look on her finger!' and, stung by the sight, he mentally exclaimed, 'If ever that girl wears a plain gold ring on that finger, it shall be one which has been put on by me!'

CHAPTER III.

'On th' other part love so constrained him, that the power thereof surmounted both honour and truth.'

FROISSART.

NEXT morning Barrington drew his writing-table into a part of the room which commanded a view of the windows of No. 15. He wrote and looked across, and wrote and looked again; but

never once caught a glimpse of the face he wished to see. The house was as dull and barren of all interest as a house could be. It seemed impossible to believe that only the night before, its rooms had been lighted up and doors flung open to receive troops of guests. Now it looked as if no one had entered it for a twelvemonth.

About five or six callers presented themselves. At half-past seven a highly varnished carriage deposited Mr. Roger Hackblock at the entrance. He was in evening costume, and was evidently going to dine with his betrothed and her family.

Barrington watched him make his way into the house, with the utmost jealousy; but, alas! that was all he could do. Wholly unfit as Mr. Hackblock was to enjoy such an honour, he had the right to enter that house when he liked; while Barrington himself was left out in the cold. It was in vain to dwell on this thought—in fact, it was impossible, for the sight of Mr. Hackblock in evening-dress reminded Barrington that he, too, had a dinner engagement, and little enough time to make ready for it.

Next day he wrote and watched as before. There were many visitors, but none of the inmates left the house, except Mr. Carey himself, who went to his office early in the morning. On the third day it occurred to Barrington that it might be well to make a little tour of discovery on the other side of No. 15, to see if he could find the door which was said to lead into the park so quickly. He went. He had counted the houses, so had no difficulty in fixing on the right door.

It was painted a remarkably bright healthy-minded green; and just as he was standing by it, and thinking how Davenport would maledict such impiety in colour, he saw a slight movement of the latch, which showed that some one inside was touching it. The door opened, and Miss Carey appeared. She wore a fashionably-made blue and white dress, which would have been an offence to the artistic mind; but Barrington thought she looked the picture of dainty freshness and sweetness, and so young that he could hardly believe she was the same girl.

When she saw him, she seemed much startled, but was too well-bred a young lady to show any sign of it beyond that one first glance of wonder. Then she raised her long eyelashes, looked in his face, and said:

‘Good morning, Mr. Barrington. I hardly recognized you at first. I so seldom see anyone here whom I know.’

‘I had a few minutes to spare,’ said he. ‘I wanted a short walk, and hate walking without an object, so I thought I would just stroll round here to see if I could discover how you can get to the park by this way. You said you did; but I could not recollect that there was any door.’

‘Papa had one made; and I sometimes use it.’ There was a certain dryness in her tone that was far from encouraging.

‘I see you do. You go into the park by that gate, I suppose?’ said he, partly intending to accompany her for a few minutes, if she said ‘Yes.’

‘Yes; but I find that I have forgotten to put my dog’s collar on. I must go back for it. Good-morning,’ said she, summoning her dog, a pug of the most endearing ugliness.

This was anything but satisfactory, especially as, without the least hesitation in her manner, she actually did go, and shut the door behind her. While she was standing by his side, Barrington had felt himself basking in the sunshine of a sweet summer’s morning; he suddenly found himself in a dull dusty road, unillumined by anything. It was not the charm of her manner which had wrought the change, for her manner had not been particularly charming: it was her beauty which had done it; and she was gone!

He felt very much disappointed and out of temper. He lit a cigar and smoked; and as he strolled up and down, was half inclined not to sacrifice the pleasure of smoking, for that of walking for a few brief minutes with her when at last she did return. But though he decided in favour of waiting, and did wait quite three quarters of an hour, she never came. That being the case, he thought he might just as well go home himself. He had a mass of work to do, and ought not to have come out at all.

When Barrington re-entered his room, he found Davenport there. He could not get on with his illustrations until he had obtained Barrington’s consent to a certain daring change of plan, and Barrington was always either too busy to talk, or out of the way.

‘Why, Barrington, where have you been?’

said he. 'I thought I might make sure of finding you at your writing-table at this hour!'

'Oh, bother my writing-table! I am not a galley-slave! I can't always be writing!'

'I see you have moved it forward. You want to keep your wife, that is to be, well in view! Have you found out her real name yet?'

Barrington turned in amazement. For a moment he had forgotten that his friend did not know of the rapid advance he had made in his acquaintance with the young lady who so short a time before had, so far as his consciousness was concerned, been non-existent.

'Oh yes, I know her name! I know all about her! I went out to try if I could see her anywhere.'

'Then, my dear friend, you should have stayed in! You should certainly have stayed in, if you wanted to see her. If you had been here half an hour ago, you would have done so. She came tripping down the steps, looking like an angel—or anything else of that superior kind you feel inclined to compare her with! I saw her! I watched her all the way up the street!'

'About half an hour ago, you say?'

'Yes, half an hour; or, perhaps, it may be three quarters.'

Had Miss Carey come out this way to avoid him? Barrington asked himself this, and looked cross and puzzled.

'It's all your own fault!' said Davenport. 'You might have stayed where you were, and then you would have seen her.'

‘Confound her! I can do very well without seeing her! I don’t want to see her! Come, let us talk about those illustrations; horrible things most illustrations are, to be sure! For one thing, the artists never think of reading what they are illustrating.’

‘Poor devils! I can tell you the artists who do illustrations are the best blowed-up set of men in London! They read more of the books they have to do with, than the critics ever think of doing.’

‘H’m!’ muttered Barrington doubtfully, giving this retort consideration, though he knew it was only aimed at himself.

‘You seem to forget what awfully hard work it is to read people’s stupid books! Don’t you get very sick of reading your own, when you have to correct your proofs?’

‘Oh, the proofs! But that is not a fair test. Everyone gets sick of his proofs.’

‘It’s quite a fair test. Your state of mind when you are going over your proofs for the second or third time—your boredom, then—corresponds with the boredom that I feel when I am going over them for the first. It’s precisely the same thing. Fatherly pride in the child of your brain carries you triumphantly through them for the first time, and even makes you think all you read very fine; but the oftener you read them, the more true your judgment becomes.’

‘Nonsense! No one would ever publish anything if he believed that to be true; but it’s not. How did you like the last number?’

‘Oh, very well! It’s good—I don’t deny it. Let me read it over to you.’

‘Read it over to me! What can you be thinking of? I have seen more than enough of it already!’

‘There! Didn’t I say that, after reading it once or twice, you were able to form a true opinion of it?’

‘Do let us have no more of that rubbish!’ exclaimed Barrington impatiently. ‘You are sure that you saw Miss Carey go out about three quarters of an hour ago?’

‘Quite. She looked lovely! I have made a little sketch of her doling out her strawberries, and very well she “comes” in it; but do give your mind to those illustrations—this is the second time I have called about them, and I can’t stay much longer.’

They were not long in deciding what they had to decide about the illustrations; and then Barrington discovered that he wanted some books of reference from the London Library, and went to get them. He liked browsing in a library, but had seldom time to indulge in this taste. To-day he told himself that he must not allow himself a moment; for it was his duty to go and call on Mrs. Dalrymple, to whom he feared he had been rather rude that night at the Careys’. Somehow or other, he had lost sight of her in the crowd, and had not taken much trouble to find her again. He got his books, and went to make his call, arriving at the house about three.

‘You are just too late to see Miss Carey!’

said Mrs. Dalrymple. 'She had luncheon with me. What, more London Library books! She had an armful, too!'

Then he had missed seeing her thrice that day! Once when she fled from him in the park, once in the London Library, and a third time at Mrs. Dalrymple's.

'I wish I had come earlier!' said he regretfully.

He made his apologies, but Mrs. Dalrymple had forgotten to take anything amiss, and said:

'I expected you to be absorbed in your admiration of your hostess. Isn't she a pretty girl?'

'Yes; but as you always say to me, Don't forget that she is engaged to be married!'

'And likely to continue so for some time,' said Mrs. Dalrymple. 'At least, I can't help hoping so; for the wedding is not to take place while her mother lives.'

Barrington looked up in surprise; Mrs. Dalrymple said:

'Her poor mother has a mortal disease. The doctors do not give her more than twelve months of life; and she has begged to be allowed to keep her daughter as long as she lives. One can't wonder at her; but I should not like to do it if I were in her place, for I should always be afraid that Mr. Hackblock was wishing for my death. I couldn't stand that.'

Barrington's heart gave a great leap: if that marriage were deferred for a year, or a year and a half, it might never take place at all. Surely Miss Carey could not be so long engaged to

that man without finding herself wholly unsuited to him?

‘Are you invited to the haymaking-party?’ asked Mrs. Dalrymple.

‘No, I am not invited to any party; what is it?’

‘Oh, by-the-bye, the invitations are not out yet; but the advertisement is in the paper!’

He looked so curious, that she showed him a paragraph in the *Times*:

‘To farmers and others occupying land in a pretty neighbourhood within twelve or fifteen miles of London. Any person who has a field of grass ready for cutting by the 10th of June, and who would be willing to allow a party from London to make hay in it on that day, is requested to communicate with C.C., care of Messrs. Hackblock, Higgins, Carey, and Hackblock, Walbrook, London. Liberal payment will be given. Liberal treatment will be expected. Rakes and other tools must be placed at the disposal of the party. NB. The field must be pretty, as well as the neighbourhood.’

‘It is Kitty’s doing,’ explained Mrs. Dalrymple; ‘she says that she is tired of garden-parties. She has persuaded her father to get up a haymaking-party. A troop of young folks are to drive down from London and take their pleasure in this fashion. She has devised a costume for the girls, and all are to wear it.’

‘Are you going?’ asked Barrington.

‘I!’ cried Mrs. Dalrymple. ‘I am considerably above four-and-twenty—I am far too old!’

‘So am I then.’

‘Oh, you are a man! As the girl said, “Women must be good-looking, but men need not, for they are so nice, anyhow.” Your age is of no consequence!’

‘It is a rather good idea for a party; at least, I shall think so if she asks me.’

Unhappily she did not ask him. This hay-making *fête* was to take place on the 10th; but when the 7th came, Barrington was still without an invitation. He had watched the house even more closely than before, but to little or no purpose. He had strolled in the park more than once in the morning, confining his rambles to the immediate neighbourhood of the gate he now knew so well. He had not seen Miss Carey. He had called on Mrs. Carey, but she had not been well enough to receive visits.

Barrington was not accustomed to disappointment. He had set his heart on seeing more of Miss Carey, and the difficulties which beset his path when he tried to do so, only made him more determined to carry his point. He was frantically desirous to go to this party, but it must be by her wish and her invitation. Mrs. Dalrymple no doubt could procure him what he so much wanted, but that would not be the same thing; he felt as if all the pleasure of the day would be lost if he owed it to anyone else but Miss Carey herself.

The 8th of June passed, and Barrington was no nearer to the object of his desires. On the 9th he had fallen so low, that he did not care how the thing was managed, so long as he received

a line from some one who had the privilege of adding him to the number of Miss Carey's guests. At last he threw himself on Mrs. Dalrymple's mercy. He was writing a novel, he said, and wished to describe a scene of this kind; it was the very thing he wanted, only he must study it from the life.

Mrs. Dalrymple heard him kindly and patiently, but looked at him with an air of some doubt; possibly she felt she had no cause for alarm, for it is a fact that during the course of the evening he received the much-desired note.

CHAPTER IV.

'There be some sports are painful.'

The Tempest.

MISS CAREY'S *fête* was obviously intended for happy folks whose time was their own. The whole day was to be given to it. At half-past eight the party was to assemble, and drive while yet the day was young to Sunningford-on-Thames, where for an ample pecuniary consideration a pretty field had been secured. When Barrington entered Mr. Carey's house five minutes before the time appointed, two drags were already at the door, and carriages and cabs had for some time been depositing young ladies, dressed in linen of the most lovely and artistic shade of pink, with delicate

white sun-bonnets poised on their heads in a way which was so distractingly becoming as to threaten the peace of all beholders. The hall was crowded with these dangerous young persons, and Miss Carey was in the midst of them gleefully completing her arrangements. The gentlemen were to wear blue blouses and straw hats; but, man-like, they shrank from exhibiting themselves in any part of this costume until they reached the scene of their labours. No one had time to speak, except on business—at least, it was part of the day's pleasure to think so. Barrington leant against the Wardour Street oak-panelling, and thought it made an admirable background to the girls with their pink dresses. And what pretty girls most of them were; but how transcendently beautiful amongst them was the one he liked best! He did not usually admire Wardour Street oak; but to-day he could even have made excuses for the large bronze trophy which, with its shield, sword, battle-axe, and spear, apparently grouped separately together, but in reality cast in one solid piece of metal, was set up on high as a decoration. A good many make-believes were to be found in this hall. There were wide-spreading antlers, belonging to noble animals which had certainly never been shot by Mr. Carey; there were numerous portraits of dignified-looking persons, whom you were at liberty to consider as Mr. Carey's ancestors, all acquired by purchase; and massive ancestral cabinets, which were now the property of a man who did not so much as know his grandfather's Christian name. It had all been done by the

upholsterer—there was no pretence about Cornelius Carey. Barrington watched him going from guest to guest, admired his genial kindness, and acquitted him entirely. With the exception of Mr. Carey and some middle-aged Hackblocks and Higginses, all the others were young. The young folks were joyous; so, too, were the old ones, especially the Hackblocks and Careys, those of the firm with whom we are most concerned. Why should they not be so? Business was splendid, and this marriage which had been so long desired by them was to take place—a day's pleasure was before them, and the day was glorious! It was evidently going to be intensely warm, and all wished to lose no time in getting off, but Mr. Roger Hackblock had not come. Before many minutes had passed he drove up in a mail-phæton, jumped down, and came in to try to persuade Miss Carey to drive with him.

‘Oh no,’ said she, in a whisper which was meant as an aside, but was easily heard by Barrington. ‘How can you ask such a thing? I’d like it, dear, of course; but I must go in one of the drags, and so must you. Do come in the one I go in. Now you are here, we can set off at once.’

She hastily began to choose the occupants of the carriage in which she herself was to go. Barrington placed himself so as to catch her eye, and held himself in readiness to clutch at the slightest hint of an invitation. While trying to make himself to look as if he were just the kind of person who ought to be asked to make one of her party,

he could not help comparing himself with a poor shipwrecked passenger, standing by the gangway, watching a handful of capable sailors manning a boat for a desperate attempt at escape, and knowing that his one chance of being included in the small band would be lost, if he showed the least sign of eagerness or weariness. Two drags were being filled at the same time—Mr. Carey was selecting the occupants of one, and his daughter of the other. To Barrington's alarm he saw Mr. Carey look at him with a flush of sudden inspiration in his eye, as if some kindly idea about placing him comfortably had just suggested itself. Trembling lest the old gentleman's thought should be to the effect that it would only be paying a proper tribute to his literary eminence to ask him to accompany the older and more dignified members of the party, he cast an imploring look at Miss Carey.

Miss Carey was too busy to pay any attention to looks. 'Let me see,' said she, 'I get so confused! I wish those who are going in my carriage would get in, and then we shall see how many more it will hold. I don't want to crowd it, but it is much more amusing when we are a large party. Will you get in, Ellen, for one?'

While this was being said, Barrington's quick ears caught the ominous words, 'Mr. Barrington, I want you to come——' Mr. Carey was the speaker, and the moment Barrington heard what he was saying, and recognized that the fatal lot was about to fall to his own share, he hastily turned to the young lady who had just responded

to the name of Ellen, and offered to help her into the drag; and then, placing his whole trust in the virtue of audacity, got in himself, sat down by her side, and began to talk to her with such energy that he thought no one would have the heart to tear him away from her. His device succeeded, the number was soon made up, and he breathed freely when Miss Carey took her place by Mr. Hackblock, and the carriage drove off. All the way to Sunningford, Barrington scarcely spoke to her. He barely allowed himself even so much as the pleasure of looking at her. He was driving in the same carriage—could hear her voice, and see her, if he raised his eyes—that was more than enough to make him happy. She was gay, and kind, and beautiful—more beautiful than he had ever seen her before; her dress suited to perfection; she was sitting almost opposite to him, and yet he had self-denial enough only to look at her at rare intervals.

It was twelve when they reached Sunningford, which was the prettiest village they had ever seen. The cottages were whitewashed, chequered by intersecting beams, and had red-tiled lichened roofs and low latticed windows, set in strange old-fashioned bays. Every house, too, had its familiar friend in shape of some great honeysuckle, rose, or clematis, which spread long arms about it, and decked it most prodigally with flowers. The whole party left the carriages at the inn, and set out in search of the hay-field—that is, began to do so, for there was no tearing them away from the cottages, and no sooner was one of these pronounced the most beautiful yet seen, than a prettier still was discovered.

'Oh come, my dear young people, do make haste,' said Mr. Carey. But they had found the loveliest cottage of all, they said, where small white clematis blossoms covered the walls with a shining milky-way of faint white stars. 'Come, come,' said Mr. Carey. 'The field we are going to is prettier still.'

The field, when they reached it, really was very pretty, and from it they could see the red roofs of the village, the grey church, and just one silvery bend of the river. 'How lovely!' 'How truly delightful!' exclaimed all, and stood looking about them as calmly as if there were no such thing as work or punctuality in the world. The grass lay ready cut for them in long swathes; two tents for the haymakers, masculine and feminine, were set up in opposite corners of the field, in which the farmer, who had made all these arrangements, was now pacing discontentedly up and down, mentally maledicting fanciful fine ladies, who must take it into their poor, silly, empty heads to come all the way from London to his hay-field, for the sake of ruining one of the very heaviest crops it had ever been his luck to clap eyes on! It ought all to have been spread out, to take the benefit of the sun, at least two hours ago.

The fact was, the worthy man wanted both to eat his cake and have it. He had, when he made his bargain, exacted almost the price of the hay, and had assumed from the first that the entire crop would be ruined by the young ladies' mismanagement. He began to think now, that it was a pity that it should receive any injury at all; but he had been so well paid that he dared not grumble

too loud—not even when Miss Carey and her maidens lost one valuable half-hour in wreathing their sun-bonnets with wild roses and honeysuckle, while the gentlemen were in their tent putting on their blouses.

Even when that was done, they had all to be taught how to handle their forks and spread the hay; and none of them took kindly to their forks, but cried out for rakes, and said that rakes were in the bond, and rakes they must have! Being informed that rakes were never used at this stage of the proceedings, they cried out for them the more:

‘They might or might not be used in country villages like Sunningford; they were always used at the theatre, and were much more picturesque than those ugly, dangerous iron-pronged things!’

The exasperated farmer, who had only lately come from a lonely farm among the downs of Berkshire, and had no respect for the theatre or anything else in London, grinned fiercely, and said something between his teeth which sounded like, ‘Nonation Lunnoners!’ but no one understood the import of such words.

‘What’s the matter, Mr. Dearlove?’ said Miss Carey soothingly.

‘The matter!’ he replied angrily; ‘the matter is that I be nigh caddled to death wi’ zeeing my good hay a-spiling!’

‘It shan’t spoil! We will get to work. Working is a great amusement to us! You like us to enjoy ourselves, I’m sure?’

Mr. Dearlove scratched his head.

'Ees,' said he dubiously; 'Lor' bless 'ee, ees! I like 'ee to hev a bit o' vun; but I dwoant' caare vur zich spourts az thaaze! Let I send a few folk to help 'ee.'

'Oh no; that would spoil everything,' said Miss Carey.

'Auh, bless 'ee, then, get on! Uz may hev unked weather arter this.'

At last the young people got to work—not that the farmer would have applied such a word to their movements. The elders of the party stood about and pretended to criticize severely, but in reality were exulting over the dexterity, beauty, and grace of their own children; and for the hundredth time the Hackblocks and Careys rejoiced over the engagement which had made them so happy. To Mr. Carey, with his bright, genial-looking round face, it was easy to look happy; but Mr. Hackblock the elder was a grim, iron-grey-complexioned, shaggy-eyebrowed man, and it would have been absolutely impossible for him to make his looks correspond with his words. His wife, too, was as angular and stern of aspect as he.

Roger Hackblock looked square and dignified in his blouse. Katherine Carey told him that he reminded her of the woodcut of Henry VIII., in her first 'History of England'. He liked the idea. She herself tripped about daintily, but rather erratically, thrusting her fork into other people's hay for the sake of teasing them, or for the chance of saying a few pleasant words.

'How delightful haymaking is!' said she to Barrington, who edged his way nearer to her as

soon as he saw that though she had begun to work by Mr. Hackblock's side, she was far too volatile to be kept very long in any one place. 'Isn't it pretty and nice?' she continued. 'But I can't think why the haymakers we generally we meet with do not dress far more prettily. You see, it is such clean work! There is no chance of spoiling their better clothes, if they do put them on.'

'Ah, Miss Carey,' said Barrington; 'I am afraid you know little of the hard realities of this world!'

'Don't say "afraid"! Wish me not to know them. Some people do go through the world knowing nothing but what is beautiful, and good, and delightful! Let me be one of those, if I can!'

He looked at her with some earnestness. Was this an instinctive cry for mercy? Did some secret consciousness tell her that he was one who would fain lead her to turn aside from the smooth paths of ease and safety into which her parents had guided her steps? He interrupted himself—her speech meant nothing particular—he was losing a rare opportunity, for no one was within hearing at this moment.

'Miss Carey,' said he, in a low voice, 'were you angry with me the other day?'

She blushed deeply, and said:

'What day?'

'When I met you at your gate, and you turned back? I am afraid I displeased you, somehow.'

'Oh no!' said she. 'It was not that.'

‘What was it, then?’

‘Oh, nothing! Nothing at all important, I mean.’

‘Won’t you tell me what I did?’

‘You did nothing!’

‘But there was some reason?’

She blushed again and looked confused—very much confused—and applied herself vigorously to her haymaking; then she said:

‘I won’t deny it, Mr. Barrington; I did not quite want to see you, then. Not for any reason which would annoy you, though, or make you keep away from me! Just for a silly reason which refers only to myself.’

‘You make me more curious than ever!’

‘I will tell you what it is some day; I can’t now. I must go. I can see that both papa and Mr. Hackblock want me.’

‘Oh no, they don’t! They are only looking this way! They are not looking at you!’

‘But I hope they do want me—about luncheon, I mean. If they don’t, I must go and persuade them to have it at once.’

‘I thought we had had luncheon!’ said he, for there had been a very fair amount of refreshment taken in the carriages on the way down, and he did not see how anyone could be hungry.

‘You surely did not think that that was going to be our luncheon? Mr. Barrington, I can give you no idea how hungry I am!’

Barrington pulled out his watch.

‘It is about half-past one,’ said he.

But there was no detaining her longer. She

went to her father and made a piteous appeal, which caused him to hurry away to order luncheon. In the meantime she began to work again. She was now under the shadow of an old grey-green ash-tree, and its feathery leaves danced about in the light breeze, and let rays of sunlight through, which flickered on her pink dress and white bonnet.

Mr. Barrington was not the only one who watched her with admiration. Mr. Hackblock was working near—he was the only one who did work conscientiously; but every now and then he could not help stopping to look at her. She was his own, and therefore doubly beautiful. Once Barrington saw him take her ungloved hand in his, and scold her tenderly for working till she had made a blister on it. Pink figures flitted about; blue-bloused gentlemen applied themselves diligently to work and pleasure, and merry laughs resounded.

The farmer heard them go into raptures about the beauty of the day, the sweet scent of the honeysuckle, and the grace of the whitesailed boats as they glided by. He could have “drattled” them all for “finding so many silly things to waste their time on.” “A pack of foolish boys and girls,” that’s what they were! Now, for the first time in his life, he realized what his father must have felt when, in a certain year in the beginning of the century, he, in the press of hay-harvesting, had employed some of the many French prisoners who then abounded in the country. But when they came to the fields, instead of turning the

fine weather to account as they ought to have done, they threw themselves down in the shade and declared that not one stroke of work could they do until that terrible sun had set. That was how his father been served, and 'thaay wosbuds from Lunnon' were just as bad!

'Varmer' Dearlove he chafed, 'Varmer' Dearlove he raged; but there was no getting them to think of anything now but luncheon! He, too, felt hungry; it was an hour past his dinner-time—an hour sacrificed in vain! Home he went most ruefully. It was the finest day of the year, and these young folks were making him lose it. The young folks were as happy as could be. Every trifle amused them, and made them suspend what they were pleased to call their work.

'There's the cuckoo!' exclaimed one.

'Turn your money nine times, and you will be rich all the year,' said another.

'Count how many times he cries "Cuckoo," and then you will know how many years it will be before you are married,' said a third, and devoted herself to the task.

'Shall we ask him?' said Roger Hackblock; and then he remembered that they were not to marry in Mrs. Carey's lifetime, and was thankful his Katherine had not heard.

'Girls,' said Mr. Carey, 'do mind your work, and let that poor cuckoo mind his! No wonder cuckoos never have time to build nests of their own, when girls make them spend all they have in answering love-questions!'

'We are working, father, and hard, too; but

we are hungry and tired. And look, with all our hard work, we have not done a quarter of the field yet!

Luncheon was ready. It was spread under some trees; and, with one consent, each implement of labour was cast aside, and all sat down as if they had had nothing to eat that day.

‘How good champagne is, when you have worked for it!’ said Katherine. ‘I never was so deliciously hungry in my life!’

Everyone felt the same. Pigeon-pies and cold fowls disappeared rapidly; so did tongues and lobster-salads, tarts, jellies, and creams. Champagne corks popped, gaiety increased. At last hunger was satisfied—no one could eat any more. Still they sat where they were, for shade was pleasant, and rest was sweet. After a long time, one conscientious person—not Mr. Hackblock, he was sitting by his Katherine’s side, and felt that he had worked quite hard enough during the morning to be entitled to pause now—at last some one said:

‘Don’t you think we ought to go back to our work?’ but this was met by a unanimous answer:

‘It’s very delightful here.’

They sat where they were, full of lazy speculation.

‘Which was the prettiest—the green of uncut grass, or the green of grass which has lain a day or two in the sun, and faded a little?’

‘Do the stems of water-lilies prolong themselves indefinitely according to the depth of the

water, or is there a limit beyond which prolongation cannot go?

Such were the questions on which they idly exercised their minds. The village tower made a pretty feature in the landscape before them; the village clock kept chiming the departure of profitless half-hours. Again a voice said faintly:

'Ought we not to go back to our work? It is three o'clock.'

All agreed that they ought, but no one stirred. At this moment the farmer returned with a group of village folks behind him, whom he left waiting by the gate. He came up to Mr. Carey, touched his hat, and said:

'If you please, sir, axing your pardon, sir, but it seems to I that it might perhaps amuse thaay townsfolk of yourn, coming as thaay doos from Lunnon, and not being gied to such work, or 'quainted with it themselves, just to show 'ee what we doos when we maens work.'

Mr. Carey appeared not to understand; the farmer continued:

'I hev fot a few of my volks; I think to myself, that it'll plize 'ee to zee how thaay tedds a vield. Thaay're plain to look at, miss,' said he, now turning to Miss Carey, and glancing at the costume which was so distasteful to him; 'but maybe thay're more fittinger dressed vur the job than any of yourn!'

'But you don't mean to say that we are not to make hay any more?' she exclaimed, with a little flush of surprise and disappointment in her face.

‘Well, ees,’ replied the farmer; ‘I thinks you had a bout afore nunchin as will sar you the main of the day. Um do say as lookers-on zees most of the spourt; so if you’ll just be sitting down on that there bank and looking on, we’ll try to put all in place.’

There was a persuasive twinkle in ‘Varmer’ Dearlove’s eyes which showed that he had some hope of gaining his desire by means of fair words. The question was put to the vote; and, after some hesitation, it was decided that, for the present at all events, it was pleasanter to look on than to work.

‘Varmer’ Dearlove was delighted. Half a dozen ‘strong daughters of the plough’ were summoned from their lurking-place by the gate, and they at once fell to with a will. There was no clamour for rakes now: the humbler fork was all-sufficient.

The farmer’s face grew round and jovial, the party in the shade happier and happier. Soon it came to be recognized that nothing could be more delightful than to sit at rest and watch others doing hard work. No one handled a fork again; and yet all through the lives of everyone present that day, whenever any of them spoke of it, it was as ‘that delightful haymaking-day at Sunningford, when we all worked quite as hard as country people do! How hungry our work did make us!’

About four o’clock, they collected a few sticks and tried to boil a kettle by a fire of their own making; but even that was too laborious for them, and they decided that it was easier to have it

done in the village. The dispersion of the party in search of sticks gave Barrington an opportunity of saying a word or two to Miss Carey—only a word or two, for whenever Mr. Hackblock left her, some one else was sure to take his place.

‘You still say that you were not angry with me?’ said he, while helping her to obtain possession of a lichened bit of an ash-bough.

‘I am certain I was not,’ he replied, but she was too much interested in what she was doing to look up, or she might have seen how anxiously he awaited her answer.

‘You might think I was taking a liberty in trying to discover how you made your way into the park?’

She slightly shrugged her shoulders, broke her ash-twigs in three short pieces, and said, almost curtly: ‘Oh no, I don’t care about that; the park is free to all.’

‘But I don’t want to assert my right to frequent it, if I drive you away.’

‘You did not. I said so before. I went away for another reason.’

‘Have you ever been there since?’

‘No, but only because I have had other things to do.’

Barrington looked dissatisfied. Finally he said: ‘I am afraid that if by accident I should meet you again, the same thing would occur.’

Katherine did not know what to reply. She was wondering whether it would be proper to say that she had no such special hatred of her fellow-creatures, but she was afraid of him, and dared

not speak at all. He did not seem to observe that she was making no answer. That surprised her. What was occupying his mind so that he did not miss her voice? She looked up quickly, and saw his eyes fixed on her face with such heartfelt admiration in them, that she could not but let hers fall in the utmost confusion.

They went home in the same order in which they had come, and as their carriages rolled away, 'Varmer' Dearlove, who was standing watching them, might have been heard to say:

'Um be a lazy lot o' volk! I'll be blamed if this bean't the last I'll hev of zich wosbuds aaz thaay a-hay-spiling over I, or my name bean't Giles Dearlove!'

CHAPTER V.

'I see the right, and I approve it, too;
Condemn the wrong, and yet the wrong pursue.'

A FEW days after the haymaking-party, Barrington again wanted a book from the London Library. His work admitted of no delay, so he went off to fetch it. As he passed the back of the Careys' house (he did not examine himself narrowly as to why he chose that way) he could not forbear lingering one minute near the green door by which Miss Carey was wont to appear. She did not appear while he was there. 'So much the better,' thought he, as he pursued his walk.

‘It is both weak and wicked to think of her! If I wanted to ruin my life effectually, I don’t know a better way of doing it. It was a vile trick of fate not to let me have a sight of her until it was too late! If I had met her before she engaged herself to Hackblock, I might have had some chance. It can’t be helped—it’s too late now.’ Barrington was not always so submissive. During the last few days he had been in many minds. Sometimes he had told himself that it would be a sin to let this engagement go on—that she never could be happy with Roger Hackblock—that if she did break it off no one would be the worse—she herself would be happier,—Roger Hackblock had no feelings to hurt, and her father and mother would readily be persuaded that whatever she did was right. On these occasions, Barrington made short work with the stings of conscience. He loved her so much that he could not give her up—at any rate, not without a strong effort to gain her. At other times he drew his writing-table back from the window, sternly resolving to make no attempt to see her again, for come what might, he must do his best to behave like a gentleman. This was one of his virtuous days, and so strong was he in his good resolutions that he even took himself to task for having chosen the path he did in going out, and went home by another way. He did not at all like doing this, but persisted, and walked on quickly without looking to the right or to the left, steadying his mind by arranging the heads of an article he was about to write. If she had not been arrayed in a dazzling

white dress he might never even have seen her, but as it was, the brightness of it attracted him, and he perceived her coming towards him, walking briskly and joyously, and full of conversation, which was, however, only addressed to her dog. He raised his hat as she came nearer. Her dog ran up to him with some condescension of manner.

‘Cosette! Cosette!’ cried Miss Carey.

Cosette was as one who did not hear. She was standing in front of Barrington, minutely scrutinizing his personal appearance.

‘Your dog is named after one of the sweetest heroines in fiction,’ said he, after the usual greetings were over.

‘Cosette is sweet,’ said she, ‘but I can’t read that book.’

‘Not read it? I am surprised.’

‘It makes me cry so. Victor Hugo is too remorseless. When the poor grandfather’s chair was taken away from him it made me cry so that I could not be seen for hours. Do you think anything so terrible could happen?’

‘Life has very terrible things in its keeping,’ said he gravely.

‘I suppose it has. Thank Heaven for letting me have a chance of escaping them! I should make a very poor heroine. I am as weak as a woman can be!’

‘You don’t know what you are capable of, until you are tried.’

‘Oh, yes, I do! I know I couldn’t bear real troubles! Why, I cannot even bear a little contradiction!’

'I can imagine that. But I fancy your life runs very happily and smoothly.'

'Most happily!—perfectly smoothly!—always, excepting the one great sorrow that my mother is so delicate. However, I don't believe that she is half so ill as the doctor says. He tries to frighten my father; but that's nonsense! Still, I shall be glad when she is well enough to go about with me again.'

Barrington saw that Miss Carey was ignorant of the state of her mother's health. It was, perhaps, better that she should be.

'Mrs. Dalrymple told me that you had all your own way,' said he, smiling.

'I suppose I have,' replied. 'They—that is papa and mama—are very kind. They humour all my fancies, in fact; all but one!'

'May I ask what that is?' he said.

They were now strolling leisurely along the gravel walk. He was waiting eagerly for her answer. He had not long to wait.

'They won't let me be an actress! I have been teasing them to do so for a long time; but they think it dreadful of me to wish it. I suppose I have no chance now of getting their consent, unless we are beggared; then, perhaps, I might be allowed to do as I like.'

'You would like to be beggared?'

'Yes, indeed I should! Both for the sake of being allowed to go on the stage, and for other things.'

'Do tell me in what way poverty could improve your life?'

'It would be so nice to work for what one wants. It is so stupid when you want anything just to have to go and ask for it. There is no anxiety, or suspense! Besides, when poor people ask for help, where is the generosity of giving them money when you have only to dip your hand into a great heap of it? I don't mean that I have a great heap, for I haven't; but, then, I have only to ask papa, and that comes to the same thing.'

'Do you often go to the theatre?'

'Yes, often. We are going to the opera to-night, to hear Carmen. I don't like Carmen. It is so stupid of that man to wreck his whole life for the sake of a woman not worth a thought! I can't imagine how people can be so stupid!'

'So stupid as to do what!' said Barrington, anxious to make her declare herself more fully.

'So stupid as to ruin their lives by caring for people whom they must know they ought not to care for! I dare say people make mistakes sometimes; but what is the use of having fathers and mothers, if people——' Here Miss Carey interrupted herself, and exclaimed: 'Oh, I have used the word "people" far too often in my speech! Have you the least idea what I mean, for I don't seem able to make myself clear?'

'You mean that you can't understand why young men and women do not profit by the wisdom of their ancestors, and give up caring for their lovers when their fathers or mothers tell them that they have chosen ill?'

'Yes. I think it is very idiotic not to listen

to the parents or guardians. They must know best! Besides, no doubt they give some reason for their opinion. It is most senseless and unreasonable not to obey them!

Barrington was wicked enough to be delighted with these sentiments. Every word which proceeded from Miss Carey's mouth showed him as plainly as words could do, that not only had she not given her heart to Mr. Hackblock, but that she was as yet entirely unaware that she had one to give. He thought for a minute, and said, with some earnestness:

'I am very much afraid that when I fall in love with any one, it will be senselessly and unreasonably. No one shall ever part me from the woman I want to marry!'

As he spoke, his eyes were fixed on the gravel-walk below; when he looked up, he saw that Miss Carey's eyes were scanning his face with curiosity and interest. She turned away with a slight blush. She had been detected while studying a type of character as yet altogether unknown to her, and was ashamed.

'Miss Carey,' he said, for a sudden recollection of former meetings with her had flashed into his mind, and brought with it a strong desire for satisfaction on a point which still remained obscure to him—'Miss Carey, do tell me why you turned back when you saw me the other day? Were you annoyed with me for being there?'

'Mr. Barrington, no. Indeed, your being there had nothing to do with it—at least not in the way you think,—I——'

‘You promised to tell me why you did it,’ said he eagerly.

Miss Carey blushed, then she said, ‘It involves a little confession, but it tells against me, not you,—however, you had better know the truth at once. The reason I did not want to see you that morning was, that I was afraid if I did we might somehow or other get into conversation about that book of yours—“The Open Secret,” you know—and I did not want to do that because, to own the truth, I had not read it. It was in the house a long time, and I dipped into it, but it looked so stiff and so deep and was so awfully learned, that I had no idea what it was all about and just left it unread.’

Barrington laughed heartily, and said, ‘I do so sympathize with you! I would not read it myself for the world. But you need not have turned back on that account.’

‘I don’t know—it is very disagreeable when things are said which one can’t follow, and one has nothing to say. I felt very awkward when papa told me to tell you how much we all liked it.’

‘You did not show it. I had no idea that you felt awkward. It’s quite a mistake to think an author’s friends ever read his books or do anything for them, but despise him for writing them.’

‘Oh, Mr. Barrington, how can you say so? That day when I turned back, I went to the London Library and got it.’

‘Well, have you read it now?’ He said this to tease her, for he knew that she had not.

‘Not the whole of it. I still think it stiff, but I am reading it.’

‘Don’t dream of doing such a thing! It is rubbish! It was written years ago. Don’t read it; read my new novel when it is written, or one of my plays——’

‘You write plays? oh, I had no idea of that!’ said she, at once warmly interested. ‘How I do wish you would write one for me—one that would be nice for me to act, I mean—that would be giving me the greatest wish of my heart. Will you?’

‘Most willingly.’

‘You really will? How shall I ever thank you enough? Fancy having a play written on purpose for me! I’ll get papa to hire a theatre for us. We will have such a beauty! How long will it be before you can get it written?’

‘I’ll soon write it when once I have invented the plot—but I must have a good plot.’

‘Of course you must. Can you invent a good one by to-morrow morning?’ she added anxiously.

He laughed and said, ‘I am afraid not, but I’ll be as quick about it as I can. You will have to give me some idea, though, of the kind of part you want me to write for you—you see it must be designed for you from the very beginning, and I should have to see you about it from time to time—we should have to consult together about all kinds of things.’

‘There will be no difficulty about that,’ replied she, but presently she added, ‘The only thing

is, that I would rather not let any one know about it until we have got everything settled—when once all is settled I am sure papa will let me do as I like, but if I spoke about it now he would most likely throw cold water on my poor little project at once.'

'But does Mr. Carey dislike your acting so much?'

'Papa? oh dear no, he very much dislikes the idea of my being a real actress, but he would let me take a part as an amateur as often as I liked if the Hackblocks didn't make such a tremendous fuss about it. They think that all these professions by which you can make money, are only adopted by people who want to make it, and that it is awfully low to mix yourself up with such people, even if you only act for once in a way, as an amateur.'

'But why should you mind what the Hackblocks say or think?'

'But I have to mind. Papa would not allow me to do anything to annoy them, besides, of course, I don't want to do so—however, I shall carry my point about this if we hold our tongues judiciously. I should like to study my part and choose the other actors, and know what theatre we can have and everything else, before I name it at home.'

'It is much better not to say anything about it at present,' said Barrington, 'the project is so very unformed. We have not even chosen the subject of the play. Think over it a little, and I'll do the same, and then perhaps we

shall see each other again either here in the park, or somewhere, and can consult a little.'

'Exactly!' said Miss Carey, 'that's much the best way. Here in the park will be the best place. I always come out at twelve.'

Her complete ignorance of the world and her guilelessness made Barrington ashamed of himself. 'Have you lived long in London?' he asked, and the connection between his thought and his speech was so obvious, that the moment after he had spoken, he was afraid that he had done so too unguardedly.

Nothing of the kind seemed to occur to Miss Carey. 'My people have lived here for a long time,' said she, 'and so have I, but I don't know very much about London, or, indeed, about anything. You see my dear mother has always been so ill.'

'But you have a great many friends.'

'Very few real ones. Mother could not make new friends—it was difficult even to keep those she had. When I was younger she very often could not see me. I remember so well how my days used to be divided into the days when mother was well enough to be talked to, and those when she wasn't. She used to lie in a darkened room on those bad days, and I used to sit on the stairs near her door, and all the servants had to move about on tip-toe.'

'But you went out of doors and saw things?'

'Oh, yes; walks in the park with a servant, and sometimes Mrs. Dalrymple took me out, and

sometimes Mrs. Hackblock, but I was generally at school.'

This, then, had been her life, and when she came to woman's estate, her parents had persuaded her to secure for herself a rich husband, with rich and influential parents, and, perhaps, also, to strengthen some business interests, by promising to marry the son of the senior partner in the firm. Barrington breathed freely, and having heard all that she had told him, he at once stifled all conscientious scruples by the thought that Mr. Roger Hackblock was taking quite as much advantage of her inexperience as he himself was.

'Then we will meet here sometimes, and plan this play together,' said he; 'but we will agree not to mention it to anyone else for the present?'

'Indeed, we must not mention it,' said she; 'I should break my heart if the scheme fell through now that things have gone so far! Papa is angelic, but there is just the fear that he might refuse his consent for fear of shocking the Hackblocks' prejudices—that would be the only reason—he can have no fear of my wanting to go on the stage now!'

This allusion to her engagement to Mr. Hackblock, junior, fell with a cold chill on Barrington. She continued, 'We shall have a great deal to think about; the dresses will have to be planned, and——'

'I shall leave that to you. No one could have chosen prettier dresses than you did for your haymaking fête.'

‘Oh, by-the-bye, Mr. Barrington!’ cried she, ‘that reminds me; you have helped me with one thing that I was anxious about, perhaps you can help me with another. Papa wants to have a portrait of me in that very dress, but does not know who would be the best person to do it. Can you recommend anyone? He only wants something to remind him of the day; but still, it may as well be good; don’t you think so?’

Barrington quite thought so, and what is more, he at once thought of the artist to do it. His friend, Frank Davenport, was the very man. He was full of genius, but as yet unknown to fame—a passionate admirer of beauty, and sure, with such a beautiful girl as a model, to paint a picture that would delight all who saw it. Barrington was very glad to be able to do this good turn to an old friend, and said warmly, ‘I can recommend a friend of mine who will paint a beautiful picture of you; it is Mr. Frank Davenport. He is an odd fellow in some ways, but a splendid artist.’

‘In what way is he odd?’

‘In every way. Artists are proverbially unpractical; he is more unpractical than anyone I ever saw; but he is a good fellow, and his wife is quite charming.’

‘Then he shall do the picture, and now that is so nicely settled, let us think a little more about the play. You must be sure to write a really splendid one! I shan’t be satisfied unless it makes an immense sensation all over London! We must have all the newspapers full of its praises.’

What fun it will be to read of the thousands of people who have to be turned away from the doors every night for want of room! Make it full of original situations and delightful scenes, and don't let us have a single dull speech from the beginning to the end!

Barrington drew a long breath of dismay. 'I'll do my very best,' said he, 'If ever I do anything at all well, it will be when I am working for you, but do remember——'

'It must be done well!' interrupted Miss Carey, with a pretty air of authority; 'but on that score I have no fear; the instant you said you would write a play for me, I knew I should have a good one! I am so happy about it; we shall have a splendid success!'

She was silent for a while, but she was evidently enjoying by anticipation the sight of a house crowded to the very ceiling. He thought things were beginning to have a very ugly side, so far as he was concerned. Not even to please pretty ladies can great plays be produced at will.

She continued:

'If only I could be as sure of my part being done well! It must be perfectly delicious to feel yourself able to drive out of the heads of a whole theatre full of people every thought which filled them before you came on the stage!'

'You need not go on the stage to do that!' exclaimed Barrington. 'I don't think any one who——'

He was suddenly checked by hearing a voice behind them, crying:

‘Kitty! Kitty! Do stop! Why would you not look my way?’

Mrs. Dalrymple was the speaker. Barrington and Miss Carey turned round in great surprise and saw her.

‘Which was your way, dear?’ said the latter, with gentle and innocent unconcern. ‘You may be quite sure I would have looked if I had known you were there!’

‘That!’ said Mrs. Dalrymple, pointing to her carriage; ‘and I have been bowing furiously to you for the last five minutes. What can you be talking about that is so interesting?’

‘Oh, do let me tell you!’ cried the thoughtless young lady; and then she remembered that her play was to be kept secret, and added, ‘I am forgetting that I must not.’

Mrs. Dalrymple glanced interrogatively at Barrington.

‘Don’t tell,’ said Miss Carey; ‘but know you have promised you won’t.’

Barrington wished she was not such a child of nature, but could only smile and say carelessly:

‘Oh no, I won’t tell! Mrs. Dalrymple, little secrets are sometimes treated with as much distinction as great ones.’

Mrs. Dalrymple did not speak. She looked rather cross. After a brief delay, she said:

‘Kitty, I was just going to Princess Margaret Street. I wanted particularly to see you, but I should have missed you!’

‘“Missed me!”’ No, dear, you wouldn’t. I am only taking my usual little run with Cosette. You know I am always out from twelve to half-past.’

‘Yes, but you are much later to-day; and this is not the park in which you generally walk.’

Miss Carey looked around in amazement. In the excitement of a pleasant conversation, she and her companion had strolled on—had crossed two busy thoroughfares, and had finally arrived in Hyde Park just in time to meet Mrs. Dalrymple accomplishing her ‘daily stage of duty.’

‘It’s half-past one!’ said she firmly. ‘Kitty, you had much better let me take you home.’

Barrington had no difficulty in perceiving that this speech, being interpreted, meant, ‘You had better let me remove you from your present companion.’

‘Thank you,’ said Miss Carey; ‘I will go with you if you want me.’

‘I do want you,’ persisted Mr. Dalrymple; and all that was left to Barrington to do was to take the two ladies to the carriage, in which there was no room for him. But the impression conveyed by his dear friend’s manner was that even if there had been a seat unoccupied, it would not have been offered to him.

CHAPTER VI.

‘Hamlet. The play, that’s the thing!’

‘Arcite.

Speak truly,

Do you think me unworthy of her sight?

‘Palamon. No, but unjust if thou pursue that sight.’

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

BARRINGTON went home on foot, but his mind was in such a pleasant turmoil—Miss Carey

had been so charming; his morning so delightful—that he soon forgot to wonder why his dear Mrs. Dalrymple should have taken the trouble to make herself so disagreeable? What were all the parents and guardians in the world to a man so thoroughly in love as he? He did not feel as if he could settle down calmly to work. It was infinitely pleasanter to do nothing but think. Unfortunately work was an imperative necessity. If he did not at once complete an article he was bound to supply, a hateful demon from Printing House Square would arrive and sit on a chair outside his door until exorcised by so much ‘copy’—on which the jaws of the press would close that very night.

He sat down to write, and wrote steadily. Long habit had made him able to drive out of his mind almost everything but the subject on which he was pronouncing his emphatic dictum. It would be untrue to say that he never looked across to No. 15; for a good many thoughts of Miss Carey, and various matters relating to her, could be held in solution even with work such as he was doing. He knew perfectly well that Mrs. Dalrymple was still there—that she had sent away her carriage, and that she was in all probability employed in making Miss Carey promise never to suffer herself to be entrapped into walking with him again—he knew all that, and yet he poured forth line after line of highly creditable Queen’s English, with quite as many ideas to leaven the mass, as any journal has a right to expect. Suddenly he caught sight of Mrs. Dalrymple crossing

the street from the Careys' house to his, with a determined step, and purpose in her eye. She was coming to remonstrate with him—going to talk to him 'just as an old friend!' For a minute he felt he must escape, but a rapid glance at the situation convinced him that he had better stay.

She came in. 'Lewis Barrington!' she began—she really was a very old and intimate friend of his—'here I am! I dare say you expected to see me!'

'When I saw that you were sending your carriage away, I thought you might possibly look in on me,' he replied with a smile.

'Oh, you saw that! How is it that you are able to see those things? and why have you changed the place of your writing-table? You need not answer me. I know! I am very angry with you!—more than angry—disappointed in every way!'

Mrs. Dalrymple was a very charming woman of a certain age. She administered a severe scolding in such a pretty, affectionate manner, that there was no being offended with her, for she contrived to convey the impression that the sharper her words the greater was her liking for the person to whom she addressed them.

Barrington never once thought of taking them amiss.

'Before you say more,' replied he, 'tell me if you have been speaking about this to Miss Carey? Have you been scolding her?'

'I began; but she is such a child! I have

told her that she must not walk alone with you, or any other gentleman but one. I do not want to speak plainly to her if I can make speaking plainly to you do as well!

‘Speak plainly to me!’ said he. ‘I ought to listen, and I will.’

‘You really ought! What I want to say is this: if you go on seeing Katherine Carey in this underhand way—if you use the opportunities given you by her mother’s illness and by her own inexperience to pay court to her, either seriously or not seriously, I shall never forgive myself for having been the person who introduced you to her! I warned you at the time that she was engaged!’

‘You did; but am I doing anything so very wrong?’

‘That’s a question that can best be answered by your own conscience. Are you, or are you not?’

‘I have not made love to her! On my honour, I have not.’

‘But answer this: are you in love with her?—rather in love, I mean. Of course, I don’t expect you to be more than that after such a short acquaintance!’

Barrington smiled at her little system of weights and measures, but answered quietly:

‘I am rather—perhaps a great deal. You see, I am speaking the truth to you, so you may believe me when I tell you that on my honour I have not shown it.’

‘But how long will that last? She is very beautiful. Is it safe for you to be so much with

her when you feel as you admit you do? You are certain to show it sooner or later.'

'No, I am not; and if I did? Hackblock would hate her changing her mind; but no one else need be very much afflicted.'

'My dear Lewis, how ignorantly you do talk! Her father would be inexpressibly afflicted—this wedding is the dearest wish of his heart. He likes the idea of his daughter being wooed as a great prize by the only son of the head of the firm with which it is his pride to be associated. Can't you put yourself in his place and understand? He remembers his own humble origin, and what a rise it was for him to be taken even as an errand-boy into their office! Think what triumph he must feel now! This marriage will put the last seal on his success.'

'Oh, yes, I understand!' replied Barrington rather impatiently; 'but I really do not see why Miss Carey is to be sacrificed to a mere sentimental prejudice of her father's!'

'Sacrificed! Don't suppose that she feels herself sacrificed! She accepted Mr. Hackblock of her own free will—she likes him. She is perfectly happy in the prospect of her marriage; I never see her without hearing from her own lips how happy she is. You must have seen enough yourself to convince you that she is telling the truth.'

'Yes, I daresay she is tolerably happy, but she knows nothing of the world. She thinks she will get on with that man, but I am quite sure she won't.'

'My dear friend, all this is completely beside

the question; it is not your business to prove to her that she has chosen ill. It would be wicked to unsettle her mind! Are you going to behave well about this, or are you not? The girl is engaged and happy; her parents are delighted with the existing state of things. Is all to come to an end because I most unluckily introduced to them a man who seems inclined to be selfish and—excuse my saying it—dishonourable? You must pardon me for speaking so plainly.'

'You do right to speak plainly; I respect you for it. You are not saying one word to me that I have not repeatedly said to myself. I can assure you of that. You might have said much more than you have if you had not kindly wished to spare me. One glance round this poor barrack of a room might have supplied you with arguments quite powerful enough to convince most men of the folly of thinking of a girl brought up as Miss Carey has been. What right has a fellow, who lives from hand to mouth as I do, even to think of her?'

'Oh, come, I don't know about that!' said Mrs. Dalrymple, who had a generous soul. 'I don't see why you should not have thought of her, and won her, too, if she had been free; but, unfortunately for you, she is not, and that ought to be decisive. Lewis, it will be anything but honourable if you persist in seeing her except in the presence of her family, in the same way any other acquaintance of the same standing as yourself might do.'

Mrs. Dalrymple's straightforward dealing effectually touched Barrington, and he at once answered impulsively:

'I won't see her at all! It is much better that I should not! I will avoid her altogether. I promise you I will: and, by-the-bye, you may as well know that our meeting to-day was accidental. I did not try to see her; at least, not when I did meet her.'

'Now you are behaving as I hoped you would; you take a great weight off my mind. As a first step, however, let me request you to wheel your writing-table back to its old place.'

Barrington smiled.

'Yes, I'll do it to-day; you may trust me. On my honour, I will keep my promise, and avoid her as much as I possibly can.'

'Thank you,' said Mrs. Dalrymple; 'I will not interrupt you any longer. You forgive me, I hope?'

'There is nothing to forgive; you have always been a kind friend to me, and probably never kinder than now. You won't say anything about this to Miss Carey?'

'I won't, I promise you that. Don't be uneasy about what I have said to her. I said very little, and I don't think she understood that. Good-bye. I am so grateful to you, Lewis, for behaving so well. Good-bye.'

It was quite true that, when speaking to Miss Carey, Mrs. Dalrymple had not spoken half so plainly as she did when she confronted the male delinquent. On the contrary, her reproofs had

been couched in such mild language, and the young lady herself was so entirely unaccustomed to disapprobation, that she failed to remark much that was said, and only received a general impression that Mrs. Dalrymple thought it unwise for young girls to spend much time in solitary walks with gentlemen. Miss Carey herself held this opinion, and was not in the habit of acting in opposition to it; but so far as Mr. Barrington was concerned, she did not see how she could help doing so occasionally, for much of the success of the play, on which her heart was now set, depended on their joint efforts to make it good. She thought of nothing now but this play. She was deeply grateful to Barrington, and delighted with her own good fortune in having secured the assistance of such a genius. Her joy was short-lived.

Just after dinner a note was brought to her; its contents were a cruel blow. Mr. Barrington presented his compliments, and was sorry to inform her that after mature consideration, he had begun to think that he would not be able to write the play about which they had spoken so recently, without a sacrifice of time which would materially injure some other work which he was pledged to finish by a given period. He therefore lost no time in informing her of this unfortunate circumstance; and, while regretting his own disappointment, hoped that she would soon find some one who would do all that she wished much better than he himself could have done.

‘As if there were any chance of that!’ she exclaimed. ‘No, he promised to write this play

for me, and he must write it! People ought not to break such promises as that!

She seized pen and paper, and wrote:

‘DEAR MR. BARRINGTON,

‘You promised to write a play for me this morning, and you really must keep your word. Do it at any odd moment. Of course do not waste your precious time by giving much thought to it—I do not ask you to do that—but just write it when you have a few odd minutes left from your other work. If you will do this, you will please me more than I can say; and you will do your more important work no harm. The play must be written by you, and you only, for I must have a good one.’

She signed her note, and sent it without an instant’s delay; and that done, for the first time in her life she went to one of the windows on the street side of the house, with a thought of Barrington in her mind. She did so wish that she could see him receive her note; still more did she wish that she could be with him to influence his reply. He must say ‘yes.’ No one else could write that play as he could.

She could just see him. He was sitting writing by lamp-light. His table was now pushed back from the window, but that did not excite her wonder, for she had never consciously looked across before. The blinds were not drawn down; she could see him indistinctly through the transparent white curtains. Her note was taken to him; he looked at it for some time; then he read it,

and very soon she fancied she saw him take his pen to answer it. Before long she had this answer:

‘Do not ask me to write your play for you. I could not do it at all without giving a very great deal of time to it; not for worlds would I do it hurriedly or carelessly. I must deny myself the pleasure of working for you; my duty lies elsewhere. I am bound to act as I do. I must complete the work I have undertaken, however much I may wish to throw it over and do what you ask me.’

‘How can he write thus when everything is settled? I wish I could see him; there is something beneath this that I can’t understand.’ Miss Carey had a sudden idea. She ran to her father, who was sleeping in his chair in the dining-room.

‘Papa,’ said she, ‘you said yesterday that I was to ask some people to dine here; tell me who they are to be.’

‘Oh dear me, child, don’t be in such a hurry! another day will do very well for that,’ he replied in a sleepy voice.

‘No, let us settle it now. I am in the humour for writing notes this evening; and, besides, we may as well get the thing arranged. Here, I have a note-book and pencil, and you have that treasure of a head of yours, so let us begin. It won’t take a minute.’

Mr. Carey named eight solid and responsible city couples, winding up with Mr. and Mrs. Hackblock and adding, ‘and your Roger, of course—he

will take you down, so our numbers will be exactly right.'

'Oh, but mamma may be well enough to appear, I hope, and there is Minna Blake—I want to have her. She won't be in town long.'

Minna Blake was an old school friend.

'But if you ask her, that obliges us to have an odd gentleman to take her in, and I don't want to be bothered to think who it is to be—I'm sleepy.'

'Is Mr. Barrington odd enough?'

'Yes, he will do very well; now you had better go and ask your mother if to-morrow fortnight will do? Come, give me a kiss, and run away.'

To-morrow fortnight was a long time to wait, but that was the day Mrs. Carey chose, and Miss Carey sat down by her sofa and wrote the notes. She did not send Barrington's until next day. Half an hour after it had left the house an answer came. 'Mr. Barrington regretted that a previous engagement,' etc.

'I begin to think that he wants to see no more of us;' said Miss Carey to herself, and then she went off into a spare room which overlooked the street; to see if she could catch a glimpse of this young man, who apparently wished to put an end to his acquaintance with her. Without the aid of lamp-light she could distinguish nothing; besides, she herself was afraid of being seen. If once she could get speech of him, she almost thought she could persuade him to change his mind again; at any rate, she could perhaps do

what was very important—get him to explain his strange conduct.

It was strange! It worried her, and she could think of nothing else! Mrs. Dalrymple had been trying to persuade Mrs. Carey to engage an elderly spinster lady of their acquaintance as a companion who would always be ready to go out with Katherine. She, however, had declined to be troubled by any such unwelcome attendant, and her mother had yielded, as usual, but there was always the fear that Mrs. Dalrymple would not let the matter drop so easily. If this Miss Baldwin's company were thrust on her, Katherine felt that she could have no satisfactory explanation with Mr. Barrington, and an explanation was absolutely necessary to her peace of mind. Every day for a week she went out punctually at twelve; punctually she paraded the gravel paths o'er which her feet were wont to stray, but no one was there whom she cared to see. Every day on her return she stole into the spare bedroom. Barrington had found that the white curtains interfered too much with the light now that his table was so far from the window, and had drawn them back a little, and, day after day, she could see him sitting at his writing as if no human power could tear him away from it. 'He does not seem to trouble himself very much about my poor little existence,' thought she; 'there he sits and writes, and writes, and writes, and never once looks across! Well, I don't want him to look across,' she added pettishly; 'but he is very unkind—he must know that he has disappointed me most cruelly. I shall never

be satisfied until he gives me some better reason for it than he has done.' She was deeply hurt by his conduct about the play, as well as by his refusal to dine at her father's house. This was the first time in her life that she had met with any opposition to her wishes. She sat in a corner in her mother's room brooding over her wrongs, and yet annoyed with herself for not being able to forget them.

'You stay too much in my room; you don't look well, dear,' said Mrs. Carey. 'Have you had your little run with Cosette?'

Yes, Katherine had had her little run, and many little runs, but they had all been solitary ones; and they might have been both amusing and useful if only that Mr. Barrington had come to help her with her play, as he had promised.

'I think it would do you good to go and stay a while with Mr. and Mrs. Hackblock—they have asked you,' said Mrs. Carey.

'I don't want to go,' replied her daughter.

'Don't want to be with Roger?'

'I don't want to leave you—he can come and see me here.'

He did come. He brought bouquets and bracelets, and presents of all kinds; he was attentive and agreeable in a bulky and important way, and decidedly very fond of his pretty Katherine; but he was a trifle dull, and Katherine felt the dulness without being able to account for it. She never attributed it to him. She thought she herself was frivolous and not equal to him.

'Roger,' said she, one evening, 'you have often

said that you did not like people who were not actors, to act; but I do think it would be a great pleasure to you to see me doing it.'

'Doing what?' said he.

'Acting a real play on a real stage.'

'Indeed it would not!' said he. 'Besides, why should you trouble yourself to do that when you can see the very best plays going, for a few shillings?'

'But the joy of doing it yourself!'

'Joy! It wouldn't be joy! You would soon find that! I shouldn't like to have a lot of people staring at you.'

'But if they stared at me admiringly, because I was acting well, and making them see things in the play they had never seen before?'

'It's not your business to do that. Besides, what does it matter to us whether they see much or little in it?'

'Think of the pleasure of interpreting a work of art!' replied Katherine.

'Oh, nonsense! Leave that to the people who are paid to do it. You are far too good for anything of that kind!'

'Very good people do act.'

'I don't know that. Katherine, you are very persistent.'

'Is it wrong to be persistent when I am really anxious about a thing?'

He hesitated, and then said:

'No, it's not wrong at all. It's quite right now.'

'When will it be wrong?'

‘When we are married.’

‘Am I never to beg for a thing I want, then?’

‘You will then have the power of getting everything that you ought to want—everything that is usual—that people ever do want, I mean—without any begging.’

‘But, dear Roger, supposing I have a great desire for something unusual?’

‘Then, my dear little woman, the chances are that it would be a very bad thing for you to get your way about it; and a prudent husband would have to interpose.’

Katherine looked as if the discussion had not ended satisfactorily. Roger was not sympathizing enough.

‘I suppose most men would dislike their wives acting?’ said she, anxious to find every possible excuse for him.

‘Of course they would! They’d hate it! It is vulgar; people of the better sort never do it—they never do any of these unusual things! You would not like it either, Katherine. I am certain you wouldn’t. You only try to persuade yourself that you would like to act; or, if you really do wish it, it is only because you meet with so much opposition.’

‘I think that is very likely true,’ said she; but she did not mean what he said.

This suggestion, however, roused her to struggle against the possession which Barrington was taking of her thoughts. It was most absurd to think so much of anyone as she had been thinking of him! Roger was quite right. She only

cared for this because everyone was so determined that she should not have her own way about it.

CHAPTER VII.

‘Will fortune never come with both hands full?’

King Henry IV.

‘My dear Barrington,’ cried Davenport, as he burst into his friend’s room one morning, ‘I have come to see if you happen to have a few odd pounds that you could lend me? I am not a very desirable man to lend money to, I know; but I will return it very soon, on my honour.’

Barrington looked up; he was alone in his dull room, writing. He had done little else than write for many weeks now, and was heartily sick of the sight of the point of his own pen. Work had told on him; he looked tired and ill.

‘Lend you a few pounds, my dear fellow?’ said he. ‘I’ll do what I can; but at this particular moment there are not many pounds in this world which I can call my own. How many do you want?’

‘Say ten! Ten will do for the immediate object which I have in view; but I need not say that I could readily dispose of a thousand.’

‘And what object have you in view?’

‘Work! I want to get a canvas, and some brushes and colours; and—will you believe it?—

that wretch Stimpson, though I have patronized him for years, won't let me have them unless I pay his bill, or at all events a part of it. "Settle his little account," he calls it, though it's as long as my arm, and has been running on for ages! I have been asked to paint a portrait—a portrait of a young and beautiful lady! I told him that, and showed him a pencil-sketch I have made of her; but he is a brute!—a tasteless, inartistic brute! I don't believe he cares a rush what people put on his canvases, so long as he is paid for them!

'Is it Miss Carey's portrait that you are going to paint?' said Barrington, seeing a curious twinkle in his friend's eyes, which seemed to imply that he had an interesting secret in reserve, and suddenly remembering that he had recommended him as a portrait-painter to that young lady.

'Yes, it is Miss Carey; and I have seen her father. He came puffing and panting up the steep stairs to my studio, and he looked at the half-finished things I have lying about the floor and tables, and gave me a commission to paint a half-length portrait of her.'

'The deuce he did! And how much is he going to give you for doing it?'

'Oh, he knows what he is about! He made a business-like bargain. He "understood I was a young artist"—rather unknown, you know; and that kind of thing. It's astonishing how quickly the idea of profiting by that fact comes into these old gentlemen's minds; he offered me a hundred pounds, hoped I would accept his terms, and

slipped an envelope with ten lovely five-pound notes into my hand, as a foretaste of what was to follow. As if I could possibly have refused when once my fingers had touched them! They were white and delicate, and crackling all over with youth!

‘But if he paid you half the price in advance, why do you want money now?’

‘Because I regret to say that those five-pound notes are no longer at my own disposal. Money, my dear Lewis, is the most precarious of possessions! Bank-notes, especially, have a way of getting spent. I notice that a fiver just seems to flutter once or twice in one’s hands, and then disappears. I never could get one to stay long with me! However, in this instance I am not the most to blame. I let that Nancy of mine have five of the notes, and before the day was over she had paid some rubbishing bills with them!’

‘Ah, I understand. Your poor little wife thought they would all come to a bad end if she did not make some good use of them quickly.’

‘I dare say she did, poor little thing! Well, I am glad I gave them to her. I am glad she had the pleasure of spending them. I wish I had not parted with those I kept in my own possession quite so quickly! At least I ought not to say that, for I made a very good use of them.’

‘How did you spend them?’

‘I did not mean to spend them at all. I meant to let that colourman have a look at them, to reassure him, and make him associate a moneyed

feeling with the thought of me, and then to keep them all safely in my pocket-book for months. I thought if I did, it would induce a habit of saving, perhaps even of hoarding; and I actually was getting to feel quite like that, when I happened to go into old Zaccary's shop, and he had the most magnificent bed you ever saw—all gilt dolphins and such-like monsters curling up their tails at the head and foot of it, and the most beautiful scrollwork I ever saw! Somehow or other he persuaded me to buy it. It is not a bad thing that I did, for you might search London from one end to the other and not find another like it!

‘You gave the whole twenty-five pounds for it? What did your wife say?’

‘Oh, Nancy? Well, she cried an hour or two, and said she would not sleep in it, and that it was far too large for our room, and couldn't possibly be got upstairs; but it did get up, with a good deal of taking to pieces, and she is going to sleep in it to-night—at least, I am.’

Barrington began to scold vigorously. He really did feel very cross with Davenport for being so thoughtless. He was a man without a sixpence, and he was always doing idiotic things of this kind. Barrington scolded, but there was no making any impression on him. Artists must pick up works of art of this kind when they had the chance, he said; they were their stock in trade; Nancy might cry and Barrington might scold, but they would both be compelled to own some day that he had done right. He would paint two or

three pictures in which this bed should appear as a gorgeous background, and then he would sell it to some great buyer for three times the money he had given for it. Meantime Nancy would sleep in it, and sleeping in a bed like that was quite an education in itself.

Poor Nancy! How many such little bits of education she must have had in her short married life! Barrington's heart ached when he thought of her. She was one of the sweetest women he had ever seen, and her husband was one of the most distracting of men. He was running over with ability of all kinds, if he would but work steadily, but so erratic and unthinking that there was no knowing what act of folly he might not commit. Barrington spoke seriously to him; Barrington spoke angrily. But Davenport could not see that he had done anything so very wrong, and the only idea his mind seemed capable of receiving was that it was important that some friend should lend him ten pounds.

'But if I did lend you ten pounds, and you went off to Stimpson's with it at once, you would be sure to see some cracked old blue-china teapot in some shop on your way there, and go in and spend all your money in buying it. I don't trust you a bit. I will lend you the money, but I'll go with you myself and see you pay for the things, and see them packed up and sent to your own studio.'

'Oh, they are not to go there! Miss Carey is not coming to my studio to be painted. She is not in town. You don't seem to be so well

aware of your beautiful neighbour's movements as you ought to be. By-the-bye, you have given up writing by the window.'

'Yes, long since,' said Barrington impatiently. 'I haven't time to think of things of that kind now. I haven't looked out of that window for weeks.'

'You have not! Why——'

'Oh, don't waste time in wondering at that!' interrupted Barrington impatiently. 'Let us go and get what you want.'

As they went—for Barrington still refused to trust Davenport with the money lest he went into a china-shop by mistake—the former said, 'By-the-bye, how does it happen that you are in such a hurry to get your colours and things when your sitter is from home? You won't get actually to work, I suppose, till she comes back, and that will not be before October or so.'

'I am to begin next week. Her people have taken a country house near Hazeldene, and I am to paint my picture there. I am to stay till it is done.'

'Extremely nice for you, young man!' observed Barrington.

'Ah, now at last you see the advantage of the material in which I work. You can write your sonnets to her eyebrows when you are a hundred miles off. No one would think of inviting you to stay there to do them.'

'I don't expect them to ask me there,' replied Barrington quietly.

'Don't you? Then you may as well know

that at this very moment an invitation is probably on its way to you. Miss Carey was speaking to me of you the day before yesterday. I went down to Hazeldene just to see if I thought I could make a picture of her—her father wished me to go—and I did not like to say to him, "Oh, I know your daughter's face by heart; haven't I looked at her for hours together through my friend Lewis Barrington's hideous white muslin window-curtains!" Why do you have such abominable things as those curtains in your room, Barrington? How can you live a day with such ugliness about you? Even I, who am a poor man, contrive to make my rooms look beautiful. You really ought to do something to yours. Now that we are out together, do let us go and choose some pretty ones.'

'Davenport, don't worry me about curtains, and don't be so parenthetical. Finish one thing before you begin talking about another. What did Miss Carey say to you about me, the day before yesterday? I want to know.'

'She did not say much about you to me, she tried to get me to say two or three things about you to her; but I could not tell her much, for somehow or other you and I have been too busy to see each other lately. I have been working at those illustrations. I only do them as pot-boilers, but I can't get on; and if they are not sent home in a fortnight, I shan't be paid.'

'Get them done, then,' cried Barrington; 'and for heaven's sake get your story done, too. What did Miss Carey say about me? That's what I want to know.'

‘How can I get them done? Am I not working like a galley-slave at them as it is?’

‘I wish the devil——’ began Barrington.

‘Nay, the devil won’t help me,’ interrupted Davenport; ‘I have heard of him stepping in to help an architect now and then, when the poor fellow couldn’t get his work finished in time, but I never heard of his doing the same good turn by an artist.’

‘Do you suppose that I was wishing him to help you?’ cried Barrington impatiently. ‘Anything but that, I assure you. Tell me at once what Miss Carey said about me.’

‘Oh, nothing very particular, after all. She said she liked you, and that you were “nice to talk to,” and so on; but that you did not like her, or something of that kind. You have refused some invitations, and have vexed her terribly, I think; but she told me you were going to be asked to spend a few days down at Hazeldene—next week, I think, it was to be.’

‘Really?’ exclaimed Barrington eagerly. His eagerness lasted only for one minute; then he remembered that however pressing the invitation might be, it was his duty to refuse it.

‘Yes, next week. I am surprised you have not had the letter already.’

‘I can’t leave town for another month.’

‘But it is August.’

So it was. It was the second week in August, and since June, Barrington had not once heard Miss Carey named. He had received her two notes, had answered both by a refusal, and had

honourably abstained from walking in the park, or watching her movements in any way. It is said that virtue is its own reward—that the consciousness that he is doing right will enable a man to endure anything. Barrington was sincerely anxious to keep his promise to Mrs. Dalrymple, and still more bent on preserving his self-respect. He was behaving admirably well, but no day passed without his having to fight a hard battle with his worse self, which told him he was a fool to make himself so wretched—and that, too, for a doubtful good—when perhaps he might be so happy. He was not reconciled to the loss of the only woman he had ever truly loved. He never would be reconciled. He wished Davenport had kept away from him. He could bear his lot more patiently when her name was never mentioned. Now that he had heard a little about her, he wanted to hear a great deal more, and to-morrow, and for many to-morrows, the contest with his own inclinations would be harder than ever.

‘How long were you at Hazeldene?’ he asked, returning to this subject, though he did not know whether he was most wishful to talk of it or to avoid it.

‘Two days; it’s a very pretty place. You ought to see it. Go when I am there, and then it will be pleasanter for both of us.’

‘How long are they going to stay?’

‘Till October. Old Carey runs backwards and forwards to business. They have gone there on Mrs. Carey’s account. She could not be moved far from home. She is an invalid.’

‘I know her; I have seen her,’ said Barrington impatiently. He was much irritated by Davenport’s way of assuming that no one knew anything of the Careys but himself.

‘The other partner—the big fellow of the firm—Hackblock—I daresay you have heard of him—is staying down at Hazeldene, too. They have a house there of their own. Stukesey Hall, that’s the name of the place, and it’s close to the house that the Careys have taken. The Careys have only taken theirs for three months.’

‘What is the good of telling me all that?’ exclaimed Barrington.

‘I was going to tell you that Miss Carey is engaged to young Hackblock; he is the only son, and rolling in money.’

‘Let him roll! I know he is engaged to her—I knew it long ago! What I want to know is whether she is in love with him or not; I mean, if her engagement makes her happy?’

‘I am certain it does! He is a great rich stupid fellow, but she likes him.’

Barrington said nothing. Davenport continued, ‘It is so disgusting to think of a man like that being able to go into a shop and buy all the lovely things which I have been coveting for years; but he cares for none of them! If you did but see the things he does buy! It makes me ill even to think of a bracelet he brought Miss Carey when I was there! It was as thick-set and massive as he is himself, and made up of ugliness and anachronisms! Well, she took it and clasped it round her pretty wrist, and wore it and smiled

as if it were something quite beautiful. Yes, she must be very much in love with him to be blind to the horror of such a bracelet as that!

‘What nonsense you do talk, Davenport! What does she think of the man himself?’

‘That he is a genius—those dull, silent, heavy men are always thought geniuses, for if they are not that, what are they? She never seems to think him dull. I used to see her walking about the garden with him for hours when I was at Hazeldene.’

Barrington had no inclination to say anything; Davenport continued, ‘Oh yes, she’s in love with him; I am sure you will think so when you see them together.’

‘I see them together! I shall not be able to go to Hazeldene!’ exclaimed Barrington. ‘Of course I’ll not go!’ he said to himself. ‘My promise binds me to stay away, but I would not go if it didn’t. I don’t want to see Miss Carey and her lover walking about gardens together.—I say, Davenport,’ he added, ‘talk about your wife as much as you can to Miss Carey. Perhaps, if you do, she may take it into her head to ask her down there for a few days.’

‘All right,’ replied Davenport; ‘it would be delightful if she did. Fancy you thinking of that, old fellow!’

Barrington was always thoughtful for Nancy. His pity for her was only equalled by his admiration. Davenport, who was wholly unpractical and without judgment in all the ordinary affairs of life, had by some happy instinct contrived to

pick out for himself a wife as sweet and good as any angel. She was not one of the characterless women whose amiability has its origin in indifference. She could even scold her Frank when his aberrations went beyond the limits of her powers of endurance, but whatever he did—and, as they say in the North, he really was ‘a heavy handful’—she loved him, and sympathized with him, and toiled for him, just the same, and never ceased to believe him the most loveable of created beings. She had been looking very ill lately, but Davenport did not seem to observe it. Barrington had been uneasy about her for some time, and earnestly hoped that this invitation might be given.

CHAPTER VIII.

‘Perhaps the smile and tender tone
Came out of her pitying womanhood.’

‘OH, Miss Carey, you will never persuade Nancy to say one word against Barrington,’ exclaimed Davenport; and as he spoke he retreated a step or two in order the better to judge of the composition of the picture which he was now painting of Miss Carey in her haymaking dress. He had pitched his easel in the library at Hazeldene, a large room with a good north light, and with walls entirely hidden by bookcases full of old books, whose grave but rich bindings made a

background which was a perpetual joy to the artist. Miss Carey was standing on an improvised platform at one end of the room, and never in the whole course of her previous existence had she submitted to so much discipline as she had done since Davenport had begun to paint her. She did not like having to remain so long in the same attitude. She found it most irksome to keep so still—thought that Mr. Davenport's talent ought to consist in being able to paint equally well whether she moved or not. She had never undergone so much constraint before, and never had such demands made on her patience. The only compensation she could find was in talking as much as she liked and making Frank Davenport and his wife talk too. For Barrington's little scheme had succeeded. Davenport had spoken of his Nancy, and had told so many pretty little stories about her that Miss Carey had been seized by a strong desire to see her; and it is needless to say that she had only to express that desire to her parents to have it gratified.

Nancy had been at Hazeldene for a week, and to her it had been a week of entire happiness and freedom from care. She was a pretty, pale young woman when she came; she was a rosy and beautiful one now. Various benign influences had wrought the change, chief amongst which were rest and peace. She and Miss Carey were great friends, but now that young lady was doing something to imperil this friendship—she was saying that Mr. Barrington was fickle, changeable, and not to be trusted! That was why Davenport had exclaimed,

‘You will never persuade Nancy to say one word against Barrington.’

‘No, indeed,’ said Nancy, blushing with shame at hearing such hard words applied to such a dear friend. ‘No, indeed, Miss Carey, I can’t allow you to say that! I like Mr. Barrington better than anyone in the world except my own husband, and so I ought.’

‘Then you have not seen the disagreeable side of him,’ persisted Miss Carey, who could not forgive Barrington for behaving so strangely—not only had he broken his word about the play most disgracefully, but he seemed determined to go on being unfriendly—he, too, who had at one time been so eager to be invited to her father’s house! So again she said, ‘He has a disagreeable side, I assure you. I don’t like him at all.’

‘I do. He has always behaved like a brother to us!’ said Nancy warmly. ‘Hasn’t he, Frank? Do tell Miss Carey how good he is to us.’

But Frank was deeply engrossed by his work, and did not quite hear her.

‘He gets you work, Frank,’ said Mrs. Davenport eagerly. ‘He helps you in other ways; and he scolds you a little now and then, when you really do need a little scolding, dear.’

‘Oh, when he buys gold beds!’ said Miss Carey gaily; for she had been told of that.

‘I don’t want his scoldings,’ said Davenport. ‘Nancy thinks Barrington the best fellow in the world because he bullies me, and buys her bonnets.’

‘Nonsense, Frank!’ said Nancy, blushing; ‘how

can you say that? But, Miss Carey, I don't mind your knowing about it—I don't mind it in the least. It is quite true; he did buy me a bonnet, and a mantle, too. He had heard from Frank that you had invited me here, Frank wrote and told him so; and, about an hour after I had got your letter, just as I was sitting with it in my hand, longing to accept your kind invitation, but not having the least hope of being able to do so—for, Miss Carey, Frank and I are dreadfully poor folks—well, just as I was sitting, ready to cry with vexation at having to refuse such a delightful invitation, because my things were not quite nice enough to go from home in, Mr. Barrington came to see me; and what do you think he wanted? He said he had heard of my invitation, and wished me to accept it, and had been thinking that I might perhaps be shy of going from home without a new dress or two. He told me that he knew Frank always kept me well supplied with splendid Japanese dresses, but was afraid he would forget I wanted every-day things; so he wished me to treat him like an elder brother of Frank's, and let him make me a present of anything I required. I am telling you this story roughly and clumsily, Miss Carey; but he put what he said so prettily—just as if I should be doing him the greatest favour possible if I let him make me this present. He said he made quantities of money by writing, but was so unhappy as to have no one to work for; that Frank and he had always been like brothers; and that if I would but do it, he would be able to write twice as well when he went back, for the

thought that some good sometimes came of his work. I did not like taking this present from him; but he seemed so hurt when I refused, and said that I looked ill, and that he had noticed I did for some time, and that, for Frank's sake, I ought not to neglect this chance of getting a little good country air. So, in the end, I accepted his offer, and took enough to get me all I wanted, and bring me here comfortably; but I do think it was the very kindest idea imaginable—not one man in a thousand would ever have thought of such a thing. You may not like Mr. Barrington, Miss Carey, but I quite love him, and I always shall.'

Miss Carey felt a curious something in her eyes; she surely could not be on the point of shedding a sympathetic tear?

'I think it was very good and sweet of him to do it,' said she; 'but it is sweeter still of you to tell it. A great many stupid, ungenerous women would have held their tongues about a thing like that, and not have named it for worlds.'

Davenport was very hard at work, but he heard that, and turned round to smile affectionately at his Nancy. There was nothing small or ungenerous about her, and he, too, loved her for telling that story—it never seemed to occur to him that it told a little against himself.

'Barrington is a good fellow,' said he. 'My wife is quite right. I ought to know what he is like—I have known him since I was a boy.'

Almost immediately afterwards he exclaimed: 'Miss Carey, you must excuse me, but that

is not in the very least the position in which I placed you.'

'Will you place me again, then, please—I forget how it was? It is horrible to have to—no, I don't mean that; I like sitting, Mr. Davenport—don't think I dislike it. It is not being allowed to move about as I like that is so horrible! Let me rest a little, and then we will try again.'

'Not yet, please; I am just doing something so very important.'

'Then I'll be quite still; I want to think about something.'

Miss Carey, though she complained of having to remain in one position, never did remain in the same for two minutes together, and was the worst sitter Davenport had ever known. This speech of hers, however, sounded more promising, and he was hopeful for some time. She actually did keep perfectly still; but, unfortunately, she looked sad instead of joyous, as she ought to have done. Her eyes were fixed on Nancy. The story she had just heard had touched her to the heart.

'Turn your eyes this way, please, Miss Carey; and do be so kind as to put a little brightness and animation into your expression. You look at Nancy as if she had been treating you ill, and you were breaking your heart about it.'

Miss Carey could not help looking sorrowful. She had gathered from the story, which she had just heard, that Nancy led a life of some privation; and it was evident that Mr. Barrington was anxious

about her health, but that her husband failed to observe that anything was amiss with it. Nancy coughed sometimes; and, now that this thought had occurred to Miss Carey, these coughs smote painfully on her ear.

Davenport never seemed to notice them. He must be blind and deaf to alarm on her account, or how could a man, whose wife looked as ill as Nancy did when she came to Hazeldene, spend five and-twenty pounds on a bed with gilded dolphins, instead of taking her somewhere for change of air? He loved Nancy passionately.

Miss Carey had never seen any husband and wife who loved each other as these two did. How dreadful if they were going to be parted from each other! What if poor Nancy were in a consumption, and going to die? Miss Carey was sure Davenport would die too if he lost her. Nancy looked so delicate; her veins showed far too distinctly—they were as blue and clearly defined as poor Mrs. Carey's.

Miss Carey sat gazing on her and pitying her, and making up her mind to be a good, kind friend to her. That story, which she had just heard, had taught her a lesson which she would never forget. She, too, would try to be kind to others, especially to girls who were not so well off as she was herself. Suddenly, in the midst of all these tender and compassionate thoughts, she became aware that she was driving her artist to the very verge of distraction. He was writhing with vexation, and seemed to be on the point of giving up his work altogether in despair. Nancy looked as if she

longed to say or do something in his behalf, but was afraid of doing wrong.

‘Oh, I am afraid I am sitting very badly!’ exclaimed Miss Carey. ‘I do wish I were not so stupid about it!’

‘I am very anxious to paint something Mr. Carey will like,’ said Davenport gravely.

He felt that he had spent nearly five weeks in the house, and had only done one week’s work.

‘Oh, papa is delighted with what you have done! Besides, he will like any picture in which I figure as the model, so you need have no fear.’

‘Yes; but it won’t do for me to be satisfied so easily as that. I had hoped to do something I could be proud of! With such a model, I ought.’

‘I’ll behave better—I really will! I suppose I need not sit longer to-day, though? I am tired. Let us give up.’

Davenport almost groaned. Thus was he tantalized daily. She never gave him a chance! Nancy took courage, and came to the rescue.

‘Miss Carey,’ said she, ‘don’t be vexed with us, or think us unreasonable; let me try to explain Frank’s feelings. Ho does not think it right to come here to paint you and do no work. It is not fair to your father. Frank has been here more than a month already!’

‘That’s nothing!’ said Miss Carey. ‘Even if that picture were finished to-morrow, neither of you should leave this place! You must stay till we go—stay till the end of October! You must

not be so unkind as to refuse. My father and mother both wish this; they said so to me, and will say it to you.'

'It is very kind of them to think of such a thing,' said Nancy. 'We will talk of that afterwards. But for Frank's sake, Miss Carey, you might try to sit better.'

'How do you mean, Mrs. Davenport? However I sit, he is sure to get that thing done before he goes.'

'But he wants it done well! This is the first large and important picture he has ever been commissioned to paint. It will be certain to be well hung if he only succeeds with it as he would like—they always hang portraits well. And if it were thought good, it might make Frank's fortune!'

'You dear, foolish people, why, in the name of all that is sensible, did you not explain all that to me before?' said Miss Carey in amazement. 'I had no idea so much depended on the picture turning out well. Here, Mr. Davenport, just come on to this platform of yours, and put me exactly as you wish to have me; and you, Mrs. Davenport, please to take your watch, and if you see me move one inch before two hours have passed, I'll pay any fine you like to impose! I can't sit more than two hours, for that will bring me to the time when I have to go to mamma.'

'Ah, you never fail in that duty, dear Miss Carey,' said Nancy kindly.

That was true. Never by chance did Katherine

Carey disappoint her poor mother, whose life was ebbing away so fast, though every aid which love could invent, or money buy, was hers.

Davenport was slowly moving to the platform.

'If you could give me two hours of real work to-day,' said he doubtfully, 'it would help me wonderfully. I told you before I was doing a very critical bit!'

'If I could? I can!—I will! Wait, and you shall see. You ought to have made me understand sooner how important this picture was to you!'

Both Davenport and his wife had the fullest trust in her wish to do her utmost to help them by being a good sitter, but none whatever in her being able to exercise sufficient self-restraint and watchfulness to carry out her intention. Great therefore was their surprise to see the minute hand creeping round in its small circle, and then round again for the second time, but yet not performing its task with one whit more steadiness and precision than Miss Carey showed in performing hers.

Never before had Davenport had anything like such a good chance given him of making a fine picture. He worked on, snatching the fearful joy which had been so unexpectedly offered to him, feeling certain that it had only been granted in a fit of momentary caprice or compunction, and that to-morrow, and the day after, and all other days, he would be reduced to fight and struggle as before, to obtain the merest fugitive glimpse of

his model in the attitude in which he wished to see her. At last she grew quite pale with fatigue, and it was impossible not to see that she was suffering.

‘You are tired,’ said he. ‘Let us stop.’

‘Indeed I am not!’ she replied. ‘Let me sit as long as I said I would.’

He could scarcely believe that she would hold out till the two hours were completed; but she did; and, precisely as the time had expired, she sprang down from her platform, exclaiming:

‘Now I must go to my mother!’ and ran out of the room.

Davenport and his wife stared at each other in utter amazement.

‘Well,’ said he, ‘if anybody had told me that she could do that, I would have laughed at the very idea. After this, I shall always admire her. She was ready to faint with fatigue; but she would not give in. She only ran out of the room because she wanted to make us believe she was not tired. She is a splendid girl—full of character! She can force herself to do anything! What a pity she should be ruined—as she will be—by having all her own way!’

‘I don’t suppose the life she leads will ruin her. It won’t if her heart is in the right place. But after all, Frank, we can’t be certain that she will do this again. It will be very vexatious if to-morrow she sits as badly as ever!’

‘Very! But she won’t. At first I thought she was only making an effort for once; but there

was no end of determination in those eyes of hers. She will sit just as well to-morrow.'

Next day she ascended her platform in a much more business-like manner than she had ever done before.

'I will sit two hours. I'll sit really well; but', Mr. and Mrs. Davenport, you both understand, I hope, that if you do get your work done sooner than you expected, it does not at all mean that we shall allow you to leave Hazeldene till we do?'

'Mrs. Carey has very kindly asked us to stay till then,' said Nancy. 'We have accepted most gratefully.'

'All right!' said Miss Carey; and then for two hours she sat as she had sat the day before.

And so it went on for a month. She never by any chance allowed Davenport to trespass on the time she spent with her mother; but Mr. Hackblock sometimes saw less of her than he thought he had a right to expect. As a rule, of course, he went up to town on business; but still there were times when this picture interfered with his schemes for the day, and sometimes he was indignant. The picture was, however, nearly finished, and the time, too, was drawing near when both the Careys and his own family would have to return to London, and when once these Davenports had gone back to their own little house in Shakespeare Street, he did not suppose that Katherine would see much more of them. Why should she wish to see more of them? They belonged to another world, and had not one

acquaintance in common with her. So he thought, but he was mistaken. He did not know that they were old friends of Lewis Barrington's. He did not know how often they talked of him, or how immeasurably Katherine's estimation of him had been raised by all that they had told her. He had no idea that on this particular morning, when he was congratulating himself on the speedy conclusion which London and its busy life would put to her friendship for these ill-chosen associates, she was about to renew an acquaintance which was much more dangerous. That very morning, for the first time for a month, Davenport found Miss Carey a most unsatisfactory model. Her restlessness was caused by something which had occurred just as work was beginning. The post had been late, and some letters which had been forwarded from London followed Davenport into what was now called the studio.

'Open them,' said Miss Carey; 'don't you want to read them?'

'Oh no, they'll keep; or stay, it will be something for you to do, Nancy,' said he, for his heart and head were quite absorbed by his picture.

'All right,' answered Nancy. 'Now for your secrets, Frank.'

Frank smiled; he was a thoughtless fellow, but he had not a secret in the world that Nancy might not know. The first two letters were dull; but suddenly she exclaimed: 'Frank! Frank! Oh dear, you can't think how vexed I am! But it can't be helped now! It is for to-night!'

‘What is for to-night?’ said he languidly. He could not be stirred up to much emotion about anything but what he was doing; he was so delighted with his model, and so hopeful about his picture.

‘It is vexing!’ repeated Nancy.

‘Nancy, you will make me angry with you, if you go on disturbing me so. I tell you what it is—you two young ladies can’t both behave well at the same time; if one is good, the other is naughty.’

‘But it really is provoking! Only think, Miss Carey, a friend of ours has sent us an order for a box at the Frivolity. Mr. Barrington is going to act Orlando in “As You Like It.” I have never seen him, and they say he is splendid on the stage! I don’t mean,’ she added, checking herself, ‘that I am not just as happy here as it is possible to be; but still it is a pity to miss it.’

‘I don’t wonder at your thinking it a pity to miss such a thing, but why should you miss it? Don’t.’

‘Oh, we must! There is no time to do anything. We should have to sleep in London, and our house isn’t ready; it couldn’t be got ready, for our servant is away, and no one there but a stupid old woman; besides, it is so rude to wish to go.’

‘Rude to wish to see Mr. Barrington act! Not rude at all; you would come back. Why, disagreeable as he is, and much as I dislike him, I’d

give anything to see him act. There is something so clever about him; something that one admires so!

‘Of course one does!’ replied Nancy. ‘It would be very strange if one didn’t—it would show some want in one’s self, I mean,’ she added, nodding sagaciously. ‘I suppose it is too late to send the order to anyone?’ she said ruefully.

‘Let me look at your order,’ said Miss Carey, bending forward to take it. ‘“Admit four,”’ she read. ‘It is a lovely large box; perhaps the very best in the house.’

‘Such a pity!’ murmured Nancy. Box orders did not often come her way.

‘If you went, you could take me,’ said Katherine thoughtfully.

‘Of course we could; but it is no use thinking of what we could have done!’

‘Wait a minute for me, Mr. Davenport,’ said Katherine; ‘I’ll come back directly.’ She left the room, and ran to the butler’s pantry. ‘John! John!’ she exclaimed; ‘I want you to do something for me. Never mind your work; that is of no consequence! It is something I must have.’

The butler and everyone else in the house knew that when Miss Carey said that she must have a thing, there was nothing to be done but procure it for her, so he was all willingness at once.

‘Get a carriage, and go to the station as quickly as you can, and telegraph to the house-keeper, in Princess Margaret Street, to have two bedrooms ready for to-night—mine and another;

and say that she must have some dinner at half-past six—not a minute later, John. That's all; be sure to go at once! Don't waste a minute, for it's a seven miles drive.' That done, he saw her maid, and gave her some orders about packing, and then she went to Mrs. Carey.

'Mother,' said she, 'I should like to go to London for one night with the Davenports. They want to go to the theatre to-night, and I want to go with them. I knew you would say "yes," so I have made all arrangements. We will sleep at home, and return here in the morning; it's all right, isn't it?'

Katherine was quite prepared for the answer she received.

'If you want to go, dear, of course it is right. But don't come back in the morning; wait till the afternoon, and then you will have time to rest: and do take care how you get in and out of the the railway-carriages.'

'It is all settled,' said Miss Carey, on re-entering the studio. 'We are going at half past two. I hope you won't mind sleeping in Princess Margaret Street; it's better than bothering your old woman. Now I'll come back to you, Mr. Davenport; I am afraid I shall not please you, though—I am too happy to be able to keep quiet. I have not been to the theatre for ages; I am delighted with the idea of going—quite delighted!'

Nancy was delighted too, but her husband looked as if he wished all the theatres in London at the bottom of the sea.

CHAPTER IX.

‘True, a goodly man!
What shapeliness and state he hath, what eyes,
Brave brow, and lordly lip! Were it not fit
Great queens should love him?’

CHASTELARD.

THE Frivolity was not a large theatre, though a very pretty one. It had been newly decorated during the summer, but it was not these new decorations that made Katherine's eyes rest on it in such delight, but the fact that she had now been for many weeks in the country and far from London and London's delicious pleasures. She enjoyed a ball or a good play with all the delight of a girl in her teens, who, after spending years of her life in the school-room, suddenly tastes joys of this dazzling nature, and tastes them only at very rare intervals. I said good play, but bad indeed must have been the acting, and poor the play, which was not called ‘good’ by Katherine. To-night she anticipated even more pleasure than usual. The play was ‘As You Like It.’ It was to be acted by a company of amateurs for the benefit of the children of a well-known dramatic author, who had been cut off in the prime of life, leaving a penniless family, and a band of friends prompt to bestir themselves to give help. The play, if a success, was to be repeated for several nights; and as all the actors were men of mark,

and as great celebrities as the company got together by Charles Dickens in aid of the Dramatic Guild, it was easy to understand Katherine's excitement. The actresses were professional, and the part of Rosalind was to be performed by the prettiest and best actress on the stage.

'It is interesting, of course, to see men like these on the boards,' said Davenport, with the indifference of one familiar with such sights, 'very interesting, and they have always some good ideas which they try to bring out; but so far as real acting goes, I don't suppose that one of them will be good for anything, except the women.'

'I thought, Nancy, you said that Mr. Barrington acted splendidly!' exclaimed Katherine.

'So I did,' replied Nancy manfully; 'I know he does.'

'For an amateur, of course you mean,' said Davenport carelessly. 'Yes, I have always heard he did.'

Katherine was thoughtful for a moment; and then she told herself that, supposing he did not act very well, she should not be at all sorry. There would, indeed, be a certain pleasure in seeing him fail a little, when aware that he was acting in her presence. It would be a just punishment for having made such great promises to her about her own poor play, and then breaking them all so disgracefully! Such was the feeling which she told herself was uppermost in her mind; but she was trying to assume a hardness contrary to her nature, and this was proved by the nervousness she felt when Barrington came on the stage. She

trembled lest he should show any inferiority. Suppose he were nervous? Suppose he forgot his part? Suppose the spectators, of whom there were a goodly number, seemed altogether dead to his efforts to please them? Barrington came on, and scarcely had he said the first words of his part, than she knew that he himself felt quite at home in it, and had no fear of failing. That at once gave her confidence, and she ceased to have any feeling but pleasure. Her pleasure increased with each development of the part; he was a first-rate actor—at least she thought so—and he certainly spoke and looked his part as if it had been written for him. He made a very charming lover. He was so deeply in love, and showed it so prettily, that no woman could help sympathizing with him. The play, too, gives such a delicious picture of happy, open-air life. Sweet birds sing, light breezes blow, trees wave green, and beneath these stray lovers as free as everything around them. Katherine was all eyes, all delight. The play was beautifully put upon the stage, and pleased her as a series of lovely pictures would have done. Its words, though, so well known, are always heard with new pleasure; the actors were men whose names were all familiar and interesting to her, and Barrington for many reasons was intensely interesting.

She watched and listened, and was profoundly stirred. Nancy was stirred, too. The earnest love on the stage reminded her of her own love, not one whit less earnest and delightful. Orlando might love his Rosalind, but others could love as

well as he. Katherine was looking at the stage—all eyes were bent on the stage. Nancy's hand stole quietly away under cover of pendant laces, to find her Frank's hand—his was half-way on the road to find hers. Katherine happened to turn, and saw this; and on looking again, five minutes afterwards, saw that Nancy and her husband were still sitting, hand locked in hand, like lovers, looking at the lovers on the stage, and feeling superior to every ill of life, just because life had suffered them to be together. Katherine felt a sudden trouble. If she and Roger had been sitting side by side, and if she had been quite, quite certain that they were hidden from all eyes, would her impulse, on feeling her heart moved by seeing the love of others, have been to slip her hand tenderly into Roger's hand, to show him that no one sentiment was being expressed on the stage which she did not understand and share? That was what Nancy and Frank were doing their best to convey to each other. She did not think that the same idea would have occurred to herself and Roger. Not because they did not love each other, she was sure, for they did and always would; but if not for that reason, why? She could not wrench her thoughts away from the stage sufficiently to answer that question. She thrust it into the limbo of things which must wait for a more convenient season before they received full attention. Even she had a little limbo of this kind.

Between the third and fourth acts, Mr. Levison, a friend of Davenport's, came into the box. 'What do you think of the play?' said he.

‘It’s a great success.’

‘I think so, but Barrington is not satisfied.’

‘He is acting beautifully!’ said Nancy. ‘How do you know he is not satisfied?’ she added. ‘Have you been behind the scenes?’

She uttered these last words with a gasp of eager interest. Most people do look on those who are privileged to go behind the scenes with a kind of reverent awe.

‘Yes, for a few minutes. I had a word or two with him there. He did not know you were in town until I told him.’

‘Didn’t know that we were in town, when we have been sitting for two hours within a couple of yards of him?’ said Nancy incredulously.

‘Oh, but Mrs. Davenport—he does not look about him. He’s far too good an actor to do that. He acts to a black mass in front, whose ingredients he does not analyze. I must not forget to give you a message he sent by me. He wants you not to go out with the first rush of people, for he has something to say to you, and will come to your box.’

Katherine listened intently. Did he know that she was there? she wondered. She felt nervous when she thought that before the evening was over she should see him again.

‘Tell him we’ll wait,’ said Davenport.

The rising of the curtain checked all further conversation.

When Barrington came on he glanced in the direction of the box where he had been told that

the Davenports were sitting. It was only a glance of friendly interest, and his face showed that he allowed himself this one glimpse of his friends, in full confidence of being able to forget that they were there the next moment. There was a flash of pleasure in his eyes as they rested on Frank. Next he saw Nancy; but suddenly he appeared to perceive who was with them, for the colour mounted to his face, and he was visibly startled. But oh, the wondrous power of treating a vast assemblage of people as a mere abstraction!—a power possessed by Her Majesty's servants of the theatres in an even larger measure than by reverend divines. In another moment, Barrington was Orlando again, and went on as if nothing had happened. He never looked again—never, that is, but once. When he uttered the words, 'But oh, how bitter a thing it is to look into happiness through another man's eyes!' he raised his eyes to Katherine, spoke with great earnestness, and then appeared to forget that she was there. Somehow or other, however, he suddenly began to act infinitely better than he had done before—his words came straight from the heart—he actually lived his part. The great actress who was playing with him, herself came under the spell which his vivid impersonation of his part seemed to cast over her. She herself had never played with such intensity. Katherine was completely carried away; her whole nature was subdued by admiration. Barrington's genius was irresistible—she felt that he must be noble and loveable to the heart's core. She heaved a long sigh of satisfaction when the curtain fell.

This night had supplied her with food for enjoyment for years and years to come! The house rang with applause—no applause could convey a tithe of what she felt. Many of the actors and actresses came before the curtain. To her mind he was the one who had done all. And she knew him—she had spoken to him—she was prouder than she had ever been in her life! She clapped her hands—she gazed on the stage with eyes brightened by the delight of seeing a great work nobly rendered; her lips were half opened, her breath came quickly. All was over.

All would never be over to her; but how strange it was that those around her were treating this as a mere play like any other play! It was most horrible to see the people down below in the stalls beginning to move away with as much indifference as if they had been at an instructive lecture at the Royal Institution. Some had even gone before the end of the fifth act. Katherine had been far too much engrossed to be more than dimly aware of that, but she did see those last people move away, and despised them for their sluggish, dull natures.

But even Davenport and Nancy were not so very much pleased.

‘Well, it went off capitally,’ said he.

‘Most capitally,’ said Nancy, who liked to repeat Frank’s words. ‘He really is clever!’

‘Clever!’ Katherine’s whole soul was ablaze with indignation. ‘Clever!’ She turned from Nancy, lest her ears should be assailed by this word again; but what was this? Lights were being put out,

great shrouding curtains pulled up or let down over the boxes—no work is done with such celerity as that of packing up a theatre for the night.

‘I thought that Barrington was coming,’ said Davenport.

‘It is odd,’ said Nancy,

‘I don’t know that it is,’ he answered. ‘He will have to speak to no end of people, and there will be all sorts of congratulations to listen to.’

At this moment a scrap of paper was put into Davenport’s hands by the box-keeper, with a few lines written in pencil: ‘Can’t see you to-night. Very sorry. Will try to do so soon.’

Katherine shut her lips tightly together: excitement and pleasure had made her forget how strangely Barrington always avoided her, otherwise she would have been prepared for this, after he had once seen her in the Davenports’ box.

‘Come,’ said she, ‘come at once, or we shall be left alone in the dark.’ She wrapped her cloak round her defiantly, and made her way out, neither looking to the right nor the left as she went, lest she should have the vexation of seeing him. Arrived at home, she threw herself into a chair in a perturbed manner—she was not accustomed to be disappointed.

‘Oh, how I have enjoyed myself!’ said Nancy, with a yawn. The two girls were sitting in easy-chairs by the fire; Davenport was at the table cutting slices of cold fowl for them. They said they had enjoyed themselves, but each sipped her

champagne languidly, with a regretful sense that all had not gone quite right.

'It was vexing not to see Mr. Barrington,' said Nancy, so her discontent was explained. Katherine's might have been expressed in the same words.

'By-the-bye, he lives just over the way, Nancy!' exclaimed Davenport; then he smiled, and, for the hundredth time lately, remembered that day when Barrington had first seen Miss Carey. He had been immensely struck by her then; it was odd that he should so soon have become indifferent to her.

'He might come and see us here,' said Nancy eagerly. 'Would you have any objection to that, Katherine?'

'Yes, great! Don't ask him to come here!' she exclaimed, and then she checked herself in some confusion.

'I say, Miss Carey,' said Davenport, coming to her aid, 'did you observe how very much better Barrington's acting was in the last two acts than in either of the others? It was just as if he had suddenly discovered a way of throwing his whole heart into it—wasn't it?'

'You know I don't particularly admire your Mr. Barrington!' said she, rather irrelevantly; in spite of her great admiration for him she could not help being very angry with him.

'But I thought you admired him so tremendously!' exclaimed Nancy.

'Can't one admire him and not admire him?' said Katherine carelessly. 'That's what. I do.'

Sometimes I think him charming in every way, and so he is—I never saw anyone more so—but it is equally true that he isn't! If you ask for my sober, deliberate opinion of Mr. Barrington, I think he is the most disagreeable, selfish, unpleasant man I ever met.'

There was yet another phase of thought which found place in Katherine's mind—that it was an honour to know such a man on any terms, and even better to be ill-treated by him than not thought worthy of notice at all.

'Frank,' said Nancy, when they at last retired to rest, 'can you explain what makes Mr. Barrington behave so oddly to Katherine?'

'No, dear; indeed I can't. He must be afraid of getting to like her too much. Nancy, you are not to talk to her about him. I said so at first, and I say so again—I am sure it is better not.'

CHAPTER X.

'Decidedly I must get the secrétaire and the Louis XVI. cupboard from Tours. The room will then be complete. It is a matter of 1,000 francs, but what could be had for 1,000 francs in modern furniture? Bourgeois platitudes, wretched things, without value and without taste.'—BALZAC *to Madame de Hanska.*

NANCY had never been so long absent from home since her marriage. She had a strong inclination to go there, just to see how the dear place looked after such a separation.

'If you are going to Shakespeare Street,' said Miss Carey, 'do take me with you. I do so want to see your house, especially your gold bed.'

Nancy knew that her home would seem poor and strange to Miss Carey; at least, she feared that there was a chance of it. To herself, that house in Shakespeare Street, with its underground dining-room, steep stairs, limited number of feet of frontage, and dull outlook, was a heaven on earth in which she and Frank lived and loved each other. To her mind, no house she had ever seen was half so beautiful. How could it be otherwise when Frank, who had a perfect genius for decoration, had himself done everything to make it beautiful. There was not an ugly or unpicturesque bit in it, from the basement to the attics. The rooms were quiet and homelike, and had a touch of old-world reality and suggestiveness about them which made you believe that you had accidentally stumbled on the tenderly preserved house where some great man of other days had lived and done his work.

'I like your home immensely!' said Katherine; 'I'd like to have one exactly like it. But don't forget that the thing I want to see more than anything else is that gold bed—it sounds so royal! Can't I see that?'

She was taken upstairs. It was now the bed in which the Davenports themselves slept. Nancy had protested against it—Nancy had affirmed that she could never rest quietly in it, knowing as she did that it had swallowed up so much of the money

on which they ought to have lived; but Frank had persisted in saying that it was an art education of itself to sleep in that bed, and he was not going to let Nancy forego it. Nancy did sleep in that bed, and for some time, as soon as the earliest rays of morning touched the tails of the dolphins at her feet, she woke up in soft surprise that another day had come so quickly. 'Oh, it's only Frank's gold bed,' she always said to herself on these occasions; 'it does catch the light before anything else.' She was too good a wife to grumble at being disturbed so early, and somehow or other she generally fell asleep again. The hangings of this bed were of subdued brocade; it occupied exactly one-third of the room, but there was no denying that the effect was rather regal. It looked as if its owners were people of condition, who had had grandfathers and grandmothers before them; and Nancy felt soothed by the consciousness of this, reconciled to her new possession.

'So that is the bed!' said Miss Carey, who never before had seen people admire any piece of furniture which had not won a medal in an International Exhibition. 'So that is the gold bed you told me about, Mr. Davenport!' For Davenport had been the one to tell the tale, not poor Nancy. 'It requires a little time to accustom one's self to it, but I really believe I rather like it.'

Two dolphins—enormous ones—disported themselves at its foot, back to back, their tails curled up with heraldic pomp in the middle, floral decorations supported them; scrolls and floral

decorations ran along the sides. Looking at the top, you might have imagined yourself witnessing a strong deputation of antediluvian monsters rearing their heads in unavailing prayer for the further continuance of the deluge.

'I suppose that bed is in very good taste?' said Katherine, who was as ignorant as a baby, or as the greater part of her fellow-creatures, on all matters connected with art.

'It is in extremely good *bad* taste,' replied Davenport.

'How I do wonder what that means!' said she, turning sweet inquiring eyes on his.

'It is a remarkably beautiful specimen of the work of a time when all taste was vitiated.'

'Oh!' answered Katherine, as if this explanation satisfied a great want of her being; but presently she added, 'I don't like those great gold creatures, rampaging about on dry land, ornamenting beds. One knows fishes never care to do that.'

'But look at the fine lines; and what a splendid design there is!'

Seeing that Katherine was silent, he added:

'I know that I spent a great deal more money on it than I ought to have done, but I was not so much to blame as you may think; for I mean to paint a lot of pictures from it. It will paint splendidly. Just look at the sweep of those dolphins' tails! Did you ever see anything so fine?'

'But you couldn't make a picture of dolphins' tails!'

‘Of course not, Miss Carey; but with a figure——’

‘Leaning against it? Something in this way, I suppose?’ said she, and she suited the action to the word; and, either because she had derived some knowledge of what was required from being so much with Davenport, or merely by accident, she threw herself into an attitude in which the lines of her figure composed so exquisitely with the curves of the strange sea-monsters on the Louis Seize bed, that Davenport threw up his hands in amazement and delight, and told her that if she would but stand still for ten minutes, she would make his fortune.

He had imagined how well a figure would ‘come’ with this background; but what he saw before him surpassed his most extravagant hopes.

‘For heaven’s sake don’t move!’ said he once more, and pulled out his pencil and sketch-book.

Katherine was only too glad to do anything to help the Davenports. She liked them, and she liked their home. It was the first house she had ever seen on which individual taste had set its seal. Those she best knew had been filled with furniture, regardless of expense, by this or that great firm of upholsterers, and nothing in their rooms ever inspired any particular feeling of love.

Now Davenport and his wife seemed really to love their little bits of china, and queer, ugly, old chairs and tables; and these things seemed to be parts of themselves. They went from room to room inquiring, as it were, after the welfare of

each with anxious affection. They fingered their china with delicate reverence, patted the cushions and their chairs and sofas as if they derived some recondite pleasure from touching them, and gazed round their rooms with an air of regretful longing, as if sorry to have been so long parted from them. It was something quite beyond the range of Katherine's experience. Hitherto, she had understood the pleasure of possessing books, ornaments, or jewellery, but had considered the obtaining a due supply of chairs and tables for a house to be as much a matter of arrangement with a tradesman as the getting in tea, sugar, legs of mutton, and fowls.

Such were the thoughts which passed through her mind as Frank made his sketch of her. She had no idea how beautiful she looked—never imagined that he cared to have her there except for the one reason that he must have somebody to set up against that beautiful gold background he was so anxious to paint. As for Davenport, he never even paused for a moment; he was so anxious to secure a record of that happy and spontaneous attitude which his good angel had inspired her to assume. He was all on fire with delight that fortune should have thus thrown down before him as a free gift what it would have taken him months to invent for himself.

Katherine would have been amused at the energy with which he was working if practice had not made her such a good model that she never thought of what was passing near her.

‘Then I may move?’ she said, when he

released her; and, as she spoke, she stretched her cramped limbs. 'Let me see what sort of a sketch you have made!'

It was charming. Katherine, in all her beauty, was leaning thoughtfully against her antique background. Her head was thrown back, so was one arm, and her hand was placed beneath her head.

Davenport had caught the likeness admirably. A painter might have toiled for months, and his finished picture would not have recalled her to her friends with half the truth and vividness of this sketch.

Katherine looked at it and smiled; she could not but see that it was exactly like her, and pretty.

'Yes,' said she presently, 'that's all very well, Mr. Davenport; but that is a portrait of me, and not of your gold bed. You bring it in in far too subdued a manner. I will show you how you ought to have placed me if you wanted to do full justice to the picture-making properties of your purchase. I ought to have had my face turned away—oughtn't I, Nancy? I ought to have stood this way, with my back turned to you two.'

As she spoke, she turned away from them, and leaned against the foot of the bed in a slightly stooping posture; but a better bit of composition than she made as she half-stood, half-leaned against her dolphins, could hardly have been conceived.

Davenport was quite overjoyed with this second good gift of fortune.

‘Don’t move! Don’t move on any account!’ he exclaimed. ‘Just let me have time to sketch you. If you will stay as you are till I have done that, I will be grateful to you for ever! Miss Carey, I do believe you are a born artist! You have the instincts of one, that’s certain!’

‘But what shall I do?’ said she. ‘My hair has come down!’

‘So much the better! How splendid it looks! That colour is worth anything!’ and, full of delight, he fell to work again.

Her hair—her ruddy golden hair—rolled over the sloping back of one of the gilded dolphins; her head drooped in happy harmony with their curves. Her face was not seen, but its beauty could be more than guessed at.

Davenport would willingly have fasted for a month for the chance of seeing this. She stood absolutely still until the time came when he would say that she might move. Not that he ever did say so; for, when he had finished his sketch, he shut the book with the air of a man who had received a priceless gift, and said:

‘Miss Carey, I don’t know how to thank you enough! You have done me *such* a service!’ Then, while Katherine was beginning to roll up her hair, he turned to his wife, and said: ‘Nancy, I want you for a minute—just one minute! Come into the next room.’

‘What do you want, dear?’ said she, following him immediately.

‘I want to give you this kiss, darling; and to

tell you that our fortune is made! I *shall* paint such a picture from that sketch!

When Katherine came downstairs, a pretty little luncheon had been set out for her. It was composed of the most simple materials; but the 'stupid old woman' had received her orders, and had obeyed them. Some grapes, some pears, some very good bread-and-butter, and a cake were there; more could scarcely be expected from an 'empty-house keeper.' Frank got out a bottle of claret, and the three sat down as happily as possible to enjoy it.

Katherine was rather tired.

'Suppose,' said Nancy, who saw that she was more fatigued than she would admit—'suppose, dear Katherine, you and I rest here until the time comes for us to return to Hazeldene? It is half-past two now; we need not move till four—that is if Frank will trust us to go to Waterloo alone, and will go to your house for our luggage? We could all meet at the station. You need not leave us yet, Frank.'

'But I'd rather. I should like to spend an hour with Barrington; and that would combine with getting your boxes, or whatever it is that I am to bring, from Princess Margaret Street.'

He departed, and Nancy made Katherine lie down on the sofa, and then went and discoursed with her old woman on high matters appertaining to housekeeping. After a while Nancy came to Katherine, and said:

'I am going out for a minute or two, if you don't object to being left. That tiresome woman

downstairs wants ever so many things, and I suppose I'd better go for them myself. Won't you have a book? You will find something or other in that bookcase. If my old woman does not hear me knock when I come back, will you be so good as to ring the bell—she'll hear that. She is so deaf she may not hear me. Good-bye; make yourself comfortable.'

Katherine was quite ready to obey. She went to get a book, and, after taking out two or three, espied an unbound copy of one of Barrington's plays. How strange it seemed to read the words, 'A Drama, in five acts, by Lewis Barrington!' She was soon deep in the first act, and read on, pleased but indignant; for how good it was, and how little trouble it had cost him to write it! From beginning to end there was nothing in it that might not have happened; and all the people in it just said to each other the very things they naturally would say.

Miss Carey thought it very easy to produce work of this kind, and read on with a growing sense of indignation. It was too bad of him to refuse to write another play for her. There was a knock at the door.

'It is Nancy,' thought Katherine. 'How quick she has been! Or, perhaps my book has made the time pass so quickly? I must listen to hear if that old woman lets her in.'

She heard her open the door, so that was all right. Almost immediately after, the door of the room where she was opened also, and in walked Barrington. Katherine's head and face were hidden

by a tall desk. He saw a bit of her dress, and, nothing doubting, said:

‘Mrs. Davenport, I have come at once to see you. I am afraid you thought it very strange of me not to keep my word, and come to your box last night, but the fact is——’

Here Katherine recovered from her surprise, and, in order to prevent him from betraying more than he ought—for probably he was about to say, ‘I was kept away by that disagreeable Miss Carey!’—she rose quietly to her feet, saying, with much dignity:

‘Mrs. Davenport has gone out for a short time. She is certain to return in a few minutes, if you will wait for her;’ and having uttered these words with much frigidity and seriousness she left the room so quickly that Barrington had no time to speak.

He had not for one second expected to find her there. He was pained, and beyond all measure astonished and disappointed, at her leaving him thus abruptly. She had shut the door behind her. He stood there too much startled and embarrassed to know how to deal with this sudden emergency. He stood for a minute in doubt. Where had she gone? She had her bonnet on, and other garments befitting the open air; and while he was hesitating whether to follow her or no, he heard, or thought he heard, the street-door shut. She had gone to her own home!

He had no very clear idea of the Careys’ and Davenports’ movements, but supposed that Miss Carey had come here to see Mrs. Davenport, was

waiting for her, and he had driven her away! He would have given anything that this had not happened. Why had he not acted more quickly? That promise to Mrs. Dalrymple fettered him at every turn; but he had not promised to be rude! Fidelity to that promise might be carried too far; day after day it was making him behave like a surly brute.

Dr. Johnson said that there was only one thing more foolish than making a vow, and that was keeping it. He did not agree with the doctor there; he would keep it—it was right to do so—but not with such savage virtue as heretofore.

Well, Miss Carey was gone, and Frank's wife would be back directly, so he would wait. Waiting was a bore, especially with the thought of this disagreeable little occurrence for sole amusement. If he could but find some book! What was that book Miss Carey had dropped as she arose so haughtily from the sofa? How beautiful she had looked as, with averted eye and cheek flushed with surprise and something very like displeasure, she had passed him by so swiftly! He stooped to pick up the book she had been reading; it was one of his own plays! She had been reading that! He took it up and looked at it, but soon found himself turning the pages almost with hatred of what he saw. What wretched trash it appeared to him now that the heat and ardour of production was a thing of the past, and his work had gone forth from him, and was no longer a part of himself! How infamously ill-put that bit was, and so was this. There was hardly

a page where he did not see whole paragraphs which wanted striking out altogether!

'How horrible it is,' thought he, 'to catch sight of one of these children of one's brain after one has been separated from it for some time. When I sent this out into the world alone, I really did think it had strength to take care of itself; and, after all, it is a stupid, rickety, half-formed bantling with no go in it whatsoever! I can't sit here reading rubbish of my own writing—that's too dismal! Let me see, Frank's wife was to come directly, but I must have been waiting more than half an hour. I wish Miss Carey had stayed where she was. I've made a disagreeable morning of it for myself, anyhow. I think I'll just go to the studio. If there is no work of Frank's to look at, he has lots of jolly things on his walls. I wish I had gone there at first.'

He ran up one flight of stairs; he began to run up another, but at the top of the second, sitting on the stairs in a recess, in which stood two sap-green sofas and one old oak table with some ferns on it, was Miss Carey. She looked tired of waiting, and very cold. Well might she do so, for all the draughts of the house found their way with sure precision into that recess where she had taken refuge. He continued to ascend; she turned, and saw his handsome but anxious eyes fixed on her in doubt and regret.

'Miss Carey,' said he earnestly, 'you left that room where you were reading and resting, and came here to this cold place. I am very much afraid that you did so on my account.'

'I don't deny it,' she answered coldly.

'I was afraid so,' said he.

She neither looked up nor spoke, but her face seemed to say, 'You can scarcely be surprised at that.' Her eyes were bent on the ground, or she must have been touched by his most evident regret. He stood there, pained by the change which had taken place in her manner, and humiliated by the consciousness of the false colours in which he was compelled to appear before her. What was he to do? She was deeply offended by the slights he had put on her—slights which would never have been so much as remarked by another, were cruelly apparent to this spoilt child of fortune, who did not know what it was to have 'No' said to her. Barrington resolved to confront the fact boldly, and said impetuously:

'Miss Carey, you impute my refusal of various kind invitations, and my avoidance of yourself, to indifference to your company.'

'Then you own you avoided me?' said she, in some surprise.

'Yes, I own it. You see I am as outspoken as you.'

'If you wish to avoid me, you ought to be grateful to me if I do leave the room when we happen to meet.'

'I am grateful in a fashion—in the fashion in which one is grateful to the surgeon's knife; but if you think that I avoid you because I don't want to see you, all I can say is, that you never made a greater mistake in your life!'

Katherine looked very doubtful. She maintained a distrustful silence. He would have liked to throw himself at her feet, and tell her that he had loved and worshipped her from the hour he had first seen her; but he was pledged to silence and coldness, and could only say, 'You still think ill of me?'

'I do not know that it is thinking ill of you to believe that you refused our invitations because you did not wish to accept them. We have no right to blame you for that. The only thing that I feel I have a right to reproach you for is the way you treated me about that play—my poor play! You *were* cruel about that! You made me hope so much, and then said you would do nothing at all to help me.'

'Forgive me,' said he—'forgive me, I entreat you; I am not free to do as I would like—that is the honest truth, and you may as well know it.'

Katherine understood in a moment, or thought she did. He was engaged to some silly girl who was jealous, and did not like him to do things to please other girls. Poor fellow! so that was the reason. He was between two fires; if he did a thing to please her, he vexed that other girl, and *vice versa*. She felt very sorry for him. Her anger went. Her face assumed its old expression of trusting confidence, and she said:

'Then I won't say any more about it.'

'You are generous!' said he; 'you understand. On my honour, there is nothing I prize more than the pleasure of being with you; and it is not of my own free will that I forego it.'

Katherine thought it was scarcely fair to his young lady to pay such compliments to herself. He was going too far now; but he had behaved so ill that a little exaggeration only made the balance true.

‘Then we are friends?’ said she.

‘Friends!’ said he eagerly. ‘Friends! yes, now and always, so far as I am concerned. Never be persuaded to think otherwise.’

‘There’s a knock—it’s Nancy!’ said Katherine.

‘Before she comes,’ said he in haste, ‘do tell me that you forgive me, and that we may be friends.’

‘Yes,’ replied Katherine, ‘I do, I will; but, Mr. Barrington, it is much easier and pleasanter to be friends with the people one sees, than with those one doesn’t.’

‘I will see you! I must see you!’ he exclaimed, for Nancy was already coming into the house. ‘I will try if it can be arranged—I am sure it can—and, Miss Carey, I will write that play for you; I will, upon my honour!’

Nancy tripped blithely in; she had bought ever so many yards of house-flannel, ever so many bars of the best yellow household-soap; she had provided bees-wax and turpentine, and what not, and came back with all the elation of a British matron who has just set a-going a vigorous ‘thorough cleaning.’ She was not a bit surprised at seeing Barrington and Katherine together; sweet, placid Nancy never wasted time or tissue in being surprised at anything. She was only sorry for Frank’s disappointment in not finding his friend at

home. 'But we are all coming back to London directly,' said she to Barrington. 'We are only to stay another fortnight at Hazeldene, and then we shall all come home, and see a great deal of you, I hope.' Barrington hoped it, too; nay, more, he felt as if her words were prophetic.

CHAPTER XI.

'Ignorance
Never hurts devotion.'

LANDOR.

'All this day an unaccustomed spirit
Lifts me above the ground with cheerful thought.'
Romeo and Juliet.

THE railway journey to Malham occupied an hour and a half, and then there was a drive of seven miles to Hazeldene; but if on her arrival there the exact number of words uttered by Miss Carey on the way had been counted, they would barely have amounted to fifty. Between Waterloo and Malham she said nothing but 'Thank you.' Between Malham and Hazeldene she contented herself with offering a shawl to Nancy, and absently seconding a hope expressed by Frank that they would not be late for dinner. She put a stop to all attempts to draw her into conversation by lying back in the carriage, and shutting her eyes. It was an attitude which she had every right to assume, for she was dreaming all the

while. She did not remember where she was; she did not think where she was going; she was perfectly unaware that she was not alone. She had suddenly discovered a new world—a bewilderingly delightful world, whose existence she had never so much as suspected. It is difficult to believe that any girl could have lived nineteen years without having had her imagination forcibly touched, yet such was the case with Katherine Carey; but now that she had tasted that joy, she gave herself up to it, and looked back on the whole of her past existence with dismayed astonishment. How could she have borne it? She had vegetated, she had slept; she had not lived at all until the last four-and-twenty hours! How much had happened in a short time! What delights there were in this world for those whose minds were open to receive them! Her mind had not been altogether open to receive this new revelation; an interpreter had come to make all plain to her. She remembered with much self-abasement that she had read that play, and that she had not been so very much struck by it when it was unillumined by Barrington's genius. Reading that play to herself had been like seeing a fine scene in nature without the vivifying force of sunlight. She recalled each scene in which he appeared on the stage. She tried to recall each word he had said. She had never before known how handsome he was, never so much as dreamed of the fascination which could lie in the human voice when swayed by passion, or love. His voice rang in her ears now; his eyes flashed in her memory. His genius

placed him far above her and everyone, and yet he was more humble than the most stupid person of her acquaintance. How kind it was to say that he felt pleasure in being with her; how noble to tell her the truth about that girl to whom he was engaged! That at once explained his past strange conduct. The girl must be a stupid creature; but how sweet it was of him to humour her folly. She did not believe that she herself could be so good as to sacrifice her likings at the bidding of anyone she loved. Could she? As she put this question to herself, she felt a curious thrill of pain, and abandoned that train of thought.

Never before had she in any way interrogated herself as to the nature and extent of her affection for Roger Hackblock. That is, never except the night before at the theatre, when she had been so struck by seeing the Davenports sitting hand in hand, and it had flashed on her mind that strong emotion would never make her feel any inclination to place her hand in Roger's by way of showing that they were one, and felt as one. Last night she had refused to let her mind dwell on that thought because it interfered with present enjoyment; to-day she did not like to think of it—it chilled her. She never did think of such things. She accepted the fact that she was engaged, as she accepted many other facts—that is, without much searching into the reason for their existence. She had promised to marry Roger because her father and mother had told her that it had been the dearest wish of their hearts for many years that she should marry him. She had

left the disposal of her future life in their hands, just as she had left the past. They had told her that she ought to marry him, and she could not help seeing that if she were to marry at all it did seem more natural to choose a man whom she had known all her life than anyone else, especially when so many people were so anxious about it. Her acceptance of Roger had been hailed with a transport of joy that was very delightful to her. A glow of contentment had henceforth filled both households, and in this genial warmth Katherine basked and revelled. She had done what was expected of her, and enjoyed the sight of the pleasure she had given, and now she had four parents who loved her and watched her movements with delighted admiration, instead of two. She felt herself to be a little sun to two homes. No one had ever yet been able to discover a single fault in her; no one had ever exacted the sacrifice of any of her likings—it was the received opinion that she could not do, or think, anything wrong. Suppose Roger ever became tyrannical, like Mr. Barrington's betrothed? Suppose he ever displayed the same petty jealousy that she did?

'Roger has a great deal too much sense! Roger knows I like him, and there's an end of it!' said the girl to herself, with a pettish anger, which showed that some thought was passing through her mind about which she was not entirely comfortable.

'Perhaps,' thought she presently, 'Mr. Barrington's young lady is quite right to put some restrictions on his liberty. If I were in her place I should not

like his looking at any girl as he sometimes looks at me.'

Then she blushed—she couldn't help blushing at the recollection of some of the things that he had said, and of the way he had looked as he spoke.

'Is it possible that he does care just a very little for me?' she asked; and as she put this question to herself, the warm blood rushed to her face, and her heart throbbed with a strange surprise and pleasure.

'Ah, me!' thought she, 'if such a man as that had happened to love me in real down-right earnest, I would have been his slave for ever and ever!'

She pursued the idea—she thought of the bliss of being the lifelong companion of a great man—of actually witnessing the creation of works which would live on, and delight the world when she and he and all now on earth were dust. She did not repine at her lot being cast on a lowlier level. Not one man in a thousand was as great a genius as Barrington! Only one woman in a thousand could be so happy as to win him. She corrected herself, and added: 'Only one woman in more than a thousand can win him, for there are more women than men in the world. I read that in a book somewhere—only one woman in perhaps twelve hundred—I don't know the right number to say, and it does not matter, for I am not the one.'

She felt herself large enough of heart and soul to comprehend the ways of a great man, and to

sacrifice herself to the development of his genius in everything. To be the companion of such a man as Barrington would be a heaven on earth; but she did not regret her lost chance—she was too humble to believe that she could ever have come within range of the possibility of having had a chance. She was happy to have seen him—to have spoken to him, and he was going to write her a play. If he would but dedicate it to her—if he would let all who lived now and all who were to live hereafter know that she had been a friend of his, and that he had thought her worthy of this honour—that would be enough, and more than enough, for her. She was not in the very least in love with him, but she was over head and ears, and deeper still than that, in admiration. She had no idea how she was overrating him.

She worshipped him as a woman who could better appraise and classify her geniuses would worship and reverence a Shakespeare. Suddenly the carriage stopped. She had arrived at her journey's end. A servant opened the carriage-door with much celerity. She saw her father in evening-dress, partly concealed by a great-coat, standing in the porch.

'How do you do, Davenport? How do, Mrs. Davenport? and you, too, Kitty—you are late, my pet. I have been waiting for you more than ten minutes!'

'Oh, we have kept your dinner waiting!' exclaimed Katherine regretfully.

'You have kept Mr. and Mrs. Hackblock's dinner waiting, you mean. We are all to dine there.'

'You are not to dress,' added Mr. Carey, for he saw that Katherine looked as if she did not like the arrangement. 'You are just off a journey, and are to be excused.'

'But I like dressing!' said she, beginning to pout a little. 'Are we all invited?'

'Yes; all. Every one of you; so run away and smooth your hair.'

'I am not going!' observed spoilt Miss Katherine, with great decision.

'I never heard of such a thing!' said her father. 'They came to ask us, and I said we would all go; and we must go.'

'You may go,' said she; 'but I have not seen mother since yesterday morning. I can't spend this evening with anyone but her.'

'Oh, she will excuse you, my dear, I am sure!'

'"Excuse me!" As if I did not want to stay with her! No; you and Mr. and Mrs. Davenport can go if you choose, but I'll stay at home.'

'Katherine!' began Mr. Carey mildly, but fervently.

'I must,' she said imperatively. 'I am not going; so don't wait for me.'

'Well, if you are not going, you are not!' said he. 'You will go, I suppose, Mrs. Davenport?'

'If I am really invited,' said Nancy, who disliked all the Hackblocks, and wanted to stay at home.

'Of course, you are invited,' interrupted Katherine; 'but don't go if you are tired, dear.'

Nancy thought that, in the interests of politeness and peace, she had better refrain from yielding to fatigue, and hastily ran upstairs to make some insignificant changes in her dress.

'You can send Roger for me about half-past nine,' said Katherine condescendingly to her father; 'I don't mind coming then, if they seem very much disappointed. Mother begins to go to bed then.'

'What am I to understand by that, Kitty? Do you wish to join the party at that time, or are you only going out of desire to oblige us all?'

'I don't want to go out again; I am rather tired.'

'Then, my dear child, you shall certainly not be sent for. Good-night, my darling; I am so glad to get you home again.'

CHAPTER XII.

'These little things are great to little men.'

GOLDSMITH.

'A mind that's scrimpit never wants some care.'

Gentle Shepherd.

THE Hackblocks readily forgave Katherine for deserting their dinner-table. To stay at home for the sake of spending an hour or two with an invalid mother is an excuse which is always accepted without a murmur.

'She is a dear good girl!' said Mrs. Hackblock to her son, the moment she heard it. 'Every day makes me more certain that you will be happy with her, Roger. She is simple and open-hearted, and there's no nonsense about her. I don't believe a thought ever passes through her mind that she would care to hide.'

'Of course not,' said Roger, who would also have maintained that the fewer thoughts of any kind, good or bad, that passed through any woman's mind, the better it was for her.

The Davenports were both rather tired, and too much out of harmony with their hosts to be able to shake off their fatigue. There was no need for them to exert themselves—none of the Hackblocks cared particularly for their company, or wanted to be amused by them. When no one of sufficient weight was present to make general conversation a necessity, the two old gentlemen were apt to fall into business discussions. In these Roger always joined with warm interest; and as for Mrs. Hackblock, she usually sat listening with an air of serene joy, which said, as plainly as words could, 'Talk of business as much as you like; do just as you please. Of one thing I am quite certain—and that is, that in some shape or other, we shall all be the richer for what you are saying.'

They did talk. Frank looked at Nancy—Nancy looked at Frank; they felt like two worthless little feathers, caught up and whirled about unregarded by a strong current, which blew steadily and strenuously in the direction of money-getting.

They were glad when it was time to return home again.

Katherine had gone to bed. She had spent a very happy evening, and had, as she believed, told her mother everything which had taken place during her absence. Looks cannot be accurately translated into words—half-formed thoughts cannot be rendered into plain English; so Mrs. Carey was as ignorant of the true state of her daughter's mind as it was possible to be. Had Katherine done even more to give her a true impression, it is doubtful whether she could have attained that result. She herself could not understand a tithe of the thoughts which were trying to find a home in her brain.

Roger Hackblock, the younger, though himself a business man, could never be made to comprehend that other people had engagements as well as himself, and had set apart certain things—arrangements, founded on convenience, which they did not like to alter. He understood the necessity of keeping office hours, and the binding force of a dinner-engagement, both for himself and for others; he likewise understood the paramount importance of any business appointment. These things meant money; but what engagement could Katherine have, which ought not to be set aside if he, by any chance, were at home for a day, and wished to spend it with her? She always went to her mother's room from half-past nine to half-past ten—that did not so much matter, for Mrs. Carey was only too glad to see him there too.

Then Katherine went to the studio, where she stayed from eleven till one, after which Davenport might sometimes prevail on her to return for another half-hour; but she did not consider herself pledged to do so. Roger was perfectly aware of these two engagements; so he ought not to have been cross when he arrived at the house about half-past eleven, a few days after her visit to London, and was told that she was in the studio.

'Will you come here?' she wrote on a bit of paper, when the servant told her that he was waiting. 'Do come; I don't like to give up sitting when Mr. Davenport has just begun to work.'

Roger felt his dignity ruffled. He did not like the studio, and would not go there. That fellow Davenport seemed to think that he was lord and master in that room now. Katherine had given him more sittings than enough for his picture. She must come and take a turn in the garden, and he wrote a line to that effect.

'But I have already promised to go to luncheon with the Hackblocks,' said Katherine to the Davenports, when this answer was brought her. 'Papa was the bearer of an invitation to me, and I sent a note to accept it, before breakfast. I don't see why I need go now. Suppose I just run and say a few words to Roger, and remind him that I am going there to luncheon? I need not stay. It would be a pity to let our sitting be interrupted.'

Davenport seemed very much put out at being disturbed at all; he certainly did not want to lose her; but Nancy pointed out Mr. Hackblock

walking up and down the terrace outside, looking uncomfortably impatient, and said: 'Katherine, you had better go. Don't disappoint Mr. Hackblock.'

'Mr. Hackblock knows when you want me here; he should come at a proper time,' said she to Davenport; but as, on a sign from his Nancy, he affirmed that he could go on for a while quite well without his model, she went.

'I was beginning to think that you did not intend to come, Kitty,' said Roger.

'I ought not to have come,' she replied; 'but here I am.'

'Why ought you not to have come?' said he, rather crossly. 'I don't see that there can be any "ought not" about it. It is not so very often that I stay away from business!'

'Yes; but you know I am going to have luncheon at your house, and I can stay an hour or two afterwards if I like.'

'Of course; but then I seemed to think that I should like to see you now.'

'I like being with you now, too,' said she, 'only I have to think about that portrait. You see, it is so very important to Mr. Davenport to make a good picture of me—you must not mind my giving up a certain time every morning to him, while he is here.'

'But he is always here! Isn't it time he got done? I don't like your Mr. Davenport, Kitty; if anyone asks me what kind of a man he is—when your portrait comes to be exhibited, I mean—I shall advise them not to employ him, and tell

them that he makes himself far too much at home in other people's houses.'

'You wouldn't really do such a thing? It would be very cruel of you if you did, Roger!

'Not cruel at all! Lots of people will employ him on the strength of his having painted you, but none of my friends shall be let in for what they would consider a nuisance.'

'A nuisance! It would be most unfair to prejudice people against him because he has spent a week or two here. He did not come without being invited, and we begged him to stay on because we liked him. It is his wife whom we like best—mother delights in her.'

'Your mother may delight in her, but I don't! She is a stupid, forward, ill-dressed schoolgirl! she's more like a schoolgirl than anything else!'

'Ill-dressed schoolgirl! Roger, you don't understand; those dresses of hers are made as they are on purpose. They are artistic.'

'That's what I complain of. When she is staying with gentlemen and ladies, she ought to do her best to make us forget that she is artistic. I call her abominably ill-dressed.'

'Well, I don't; but even if she were, you ought to remember that she has not much money to spend on clothes.'

'Then she ought not to come here! It is horrible to see anyone in those——'

Katherine turned on him almost fiercely, and said: 'What does it signify whether her dresses cost much or little? she always looks well in them.'

'But she doesn't, and in a house like this—
—' began Roger Hackblock.

'Roger, do say no more; I won't have it! I shall get really vexed!'

'I say, in a house like this, people should keep up a certain appearance; they should do so because the servants make such remarks, if for no other reason.'

Katherine looked at him in horror, and began to put her hands over her ears.

'Katherine, I don't understand you,' said he solemnly.

'That you certainly do not, or you would not talk as you do. Nancy Davenport is a dear woman; I am very fond of her. I have made her my friend, and I mean to keep her as my friend—so there!'

'*So there!* Is that the way you talk to me, Katherine? All I can say is, that you may make her your friend if you choose, for the present, but she shall never be a friend of mine.'

'How shall we do then?' she inquired provokingly, 'for I do not intend to give her up.'

'Talk to my mother about this,' said he.

'No; why should I do that, when I have a mother of my own I can talk to?'

Katherine knew quite well that neither Mr. nor Mrs. Hackblock liked the Davenports. Mr. Hackblock sometimes walked through the studio and patronized Frank a little, and always spoke to Nancy as he would have spoken to his housemaid's sister, if he had been called on to address that young person. Mrs. Hackblock, in rich,

dull-coloured silks and satins, was now and then tolerably civil to her, but usually swept past without particularly noticing her. All the Hackblocks thought the Davenports artistic vagrants, who were preying on the moneyed classes. Katherine Carey knew and resented this.

‘Katherine dear, I hardly know you to-day,’ said Roger.

‘I suppose I am rather ill-tempered, Roger; but I am in earnest when I say that I mean to keep Mrs. Davenport as a friend; I like her, I pity her, and I want to help her.’

‘Well, we won’t quarrel about it now, Kitty,’ said he.

She was so handsome in her generous anger that, though he was firmly resolved to break off this silly friendship, he could for the moment do nothing but look admiringly at Katherine. She was magnificently beautiful, and as he looked, he felt that no one could see her without owning that Roger Hackblock had known how to choose a handsome wife. His words seemed to say that he only postponed the battle. Katherine either thought that he had yielded, or had no fear of not being able to make him do so hereafter. She talked to him for some time as if nothing had occurred. And yet something had occurred, which there was no chance of her ever forgetting. The contrast between the conduct of Messrs. Hackblock and Barrington with regard to Nancy had been set forth in strong relief before her, and signally to the disadvantage of her own betrothed. Barrington had thought with affectionate pity of the

possible shortcomings in poor little Nancy's raiment, and had chivalrously dedicated his own hardly-worked-for earnings to the service of her health and beauty. Roger, with thousands to fling about at will, could find nothing better to do than sneer at this little lady of Nature's own making, because her silks were not so thick as his mother's, and her clothes not cut after a fashion familiar to him. Katherine thought a great deal about Barrington during these lovely, late October days in the country. Sometimes she was almost terrified to find how much she did think of him.

About a fortnight after this, the time came for the Careys to go home; their tenancy had expired, and the season, though still very beautiful, was so far advanced that, for an invalid, town seemed preferable to the country. Katherine was not to return with them. The Hackblocks had put in their claim to have a short visit from her. They knew that she would not be allowed to stay long, but declared that 'those Davenports and that picture had engrossed so much of her time that they had hardly seen her, and she must stay a few days with them.' Their claim was admitted, and on the day that the Careys left Hazeldene, Katherine went to Stokesey Hall, where the Hackblocks intended to remain till Christmas. Mr. Hackblock, as before said, was a stern, iron-grey, rugged-looking man, pitiless and powerful. Mrs. Hackblock, a tall, spare, pale-faced lady, with a mind addicted to governing others. She had an object in inviting Katherine to Stokesey. She wished to take the first steps towards putting her future daughter-in-

law into the way of playing her part as mistress there, when her own career of usefulness had drawn to a close. Not till Katherine took up her abode with the Hackblocks did she know how much truth there was in the statement that she had been engrossed by the Davenports. There were so many things which she might easily have known, of which she had been entirely ignorant until she came to pay this little visit—the first she had ever paid the Hackblocks.

‘Who lives in that house?’ she asked, pointing to a square grey building on a well-wooded hillside.

‘Mr. Beauchamp,’ replied Mrs. Hackblock, with prim indifference.

‘Why don’t some of us know Mr. Beauchamp?’ inquired Katherine.

‘You must ask him that. He shuts himself up—never calls on new-comers.’

‘And that white house a little farther on, who lives there?’

‘The Cliffords live there.’

‘Are they nice?’

‘I suppose so. They have not called on us.’

Something in her tone made Katherine ask, ‘Why not?’

‘People of that kind don’t like calling on people like us. We have wealth and comfort, and they would like to have them too, but haven’t brains enough to get them for themselves. They have to be content with their old names and the little bit of money handed down by their fathers. Not that Hackblock is not a far better

name than either Beauchamp or Clifford, only those people do not know it.'

'Not really?' said Katherine, rather incredulously.

'My dear, yes. The Hackblocks were great people here long before William the Conqueror brought over that plundering band of scape-grace Normans. Hackblock is a grand old Norse name. It is the fashion to think it a fine thing to be descended from some vagrant Norman or other, and these Cliffords and Beauchamps take it upon themselves to despise us; but let them despise us as they like, we have plenty of solid comfort when we look about us.'

Mrs. Hackblock did look about her. She saw soft easy-chairs and couches covered with the most expensive brocade that could be bought, curtains whose very linings cost more than other people's curtains, pictures which her husband, note-book in hand, had paraded along the line in the Royal Academy to buy, and had bought, not letting one which cost more than eight hundred guineas escape him, though not, perhaps, paying much attention to any other test of merit than position and price. She knew that the Cliffords had nothing on their walls but half a dozen dirty smoky-looking things which must already have done duty as pictures for centuries. Let the Beauchamps and the Cliffords be as exclusive as they liked, Hackblock, Higgins, Carey and Co. had nothing to gain from their acquaintance! Even if they had been friendly, the most that they would have done for the firm would have been to invite the Hackblocks to dinner

once or twice a year; and Mrs. Hackblock knew for a fact that they only kept one kitchen-maid apiece, and did not give their cooks half such high wages as she gave hers.

‘We know how to spend our money, and we know how to keep it,’ said Mrs. Hackblock.

She did know how to keep it, and she tried to impart her knowledge to Katherine. ‘Let me show you how my morning goes,’ said she, the day after Miss Carey’s arrival. ‘Busily enough, I can assure you, but I have always something to show for my work when it is over.’

Katherine sighed. As the late Lord Lytton would have said, it was the first time that the Beautiful had been confronted with the Actual, and Beautiful did not like it.

‘Don’t sigh; that is always a waste of time. Come with me and order dinner, and then it’s the morning for the beds.’

Katherine raised lovely but regretful eyes to the older lady’s face. She wondered what that could mean—she did not like the prospect before her.

‘It won’t take long, but I always do it once a month. Once a month, regularly, I see the beds made. It’s the only way to be sure that all is as it ought to be. If you don’t, your mattresses get deep trenches down the centre of them, and your blankets out of order; and the servants see things going into holes, and just cover them up and say nothing. Mind you go your rounds, as I do, once a month.’ They ordered dinner, saw the beds made, returned to the morning-room, and then

Mrs. Hackblock exclaimed, 'I am five minutes behind my time for ringing for the eggs.'

Again Katherine's eyes opened wide in wonder. She did not, however, feel sufficient interest in the matter to ask a question. Two men servants came in, each carrying a flat basket filled with lovely, white, shining eggs. There was nothing rare about these eggs—all and severally they were the product of the domestic hen. They placed them on the table, together with an empty basket of the same kind; rolled a chair forward, and then, with much ceremony, laid a gold pencil ready for Mrs. Hackblock's use, and prepared to retire.

'Place two chairs, and bring another pencil; Miss Carey will assist me to-day,' said Mrs. Hackblock, with much dignity. Katherine still could not imagine what this meant. Mrs. Hackblock glided solemnly to the table and said: 'I like to have everything in my house done in an orderly manner. I hope when you and Roger are married you will have the same feeling. Your mother, my dear child, has been too much of an invalid to give you the required training; you must allow me to supply her place. I love you as a mother, so I do not see why I should not. Look here, dear; I take each egg in turn, one by one. I write on each the date of the day on which it was laid. Then there can be no mistake in using them, for the cook has only to glance at them and see. You will help me, I am sure.'

'Most willingly,' said Katherine, wondering much whether the cook was a consenting party to this. 'Let me see—to-day is the 2nd November.'

‘Ah, now you see the value of training. You have to approximate things a little. You can’t, of course, get hens to be methodical. Some will lay their eggs a little earlier and some a little later in the day than the others; so I never can mark them all truly. I have them collected early in the morning, and mark them as if laid the day before. It’s not quite a true way of doing it, but I can’t find any that would both suit me and be more exact.’

They marked the eggs, November 1st. It was a pretty little employment enough, though rather monotonous; still, Katherine liked fingering eggs fresh enough to have a rosy gleam of light in them. ‘What a number there are!’ said she.

‘There are not so many as usual. My hens lay on an average——’

‘Oh, I know all about averages,’ interrupted Katherine gaily. ‘I can tell you all about them.’

‘Then do tell me,’ said Mrs. Hackblock.

‘Well, after all, I am afraid I do not quite know what they are like—I mean, I can’t quite describe the look of them; but I know that they are things hens do lay on!’

‘You dear, sweet, little goose!’ said Mrs. Hackblock, much pleased. ‘What will Roger say when I tell him that?’

Katherine tossed her head; he would admire her, she knew. If she had perhaps shown ignorance, then he would see cause to admire ignorance. ‘We have spent more than half an hour in doing this!’ said she. ‘Do you really do it every morning?’

‘Yes, every morning. You can’t do things one day, and leave them undone the next; you must go steadily on with them. There! It’s done!’ and so saying, she arose and rang the bell, and the two men came in again in solemn procession, removed the chairs, pencils, and eggs; in fact, destroyed all trace of the proceedings except the consciousness of a good action, and then disappeared.

‘Now we will go to the fruit-room,’ said Mrs. Hackblock; but first she rang the bell.

This time a maid came, bringing with her a warm Shetland shawl and a hood.

‘Bring another shawl and hood. Miss Carey will assist me to-day.’

‘Everything in this house seems capable of reduplication! Mrs. Hackblock used these very words when she spoke to the man half an hour ago!’ thought Katherine, in whose mind the seeds of revolt were fast springing up.

A double supply of everything was brought; and the two ladies were warmly dressed before they went to the cold fruit-room.

It was a large room, built six or eight feet underground to escape frost, with rows of wide shelves all round it, on which were spread pears and apples.

Mrs. Hackblock at once applied herself to seeking out all that looked limp, or showed any signs of decay, and bade Katherine do the same.

‘Put them on this shelf in the corner,’ said she; and then they will be used first.’

‘Did you say you did this every day?’ exclaimed Katherine.

‘Every day.’

‘And the apples as well?’

‘And the apples as well.’

‘Can’t the servants do it?’

‘What servant would take the trouble?’

‘I am sure I wouldn’t!’ said Katherine, who was wholly unused to hide her feelings.

‘My dear, that’s why I want to train you; your poor mother has never had the health to do it, or you would not talk in that way!’

Katherine made no reply. For once, indeed, this kind of thing rather amused her. Next day, too, she again went her rounds with Mrs. Hackblock. They visited the work-room; they cemented together a quantity of broken china; they spent nearly an hour in mending a store of old quill pens. On the third day, Katherine declined to do more; she understood everything that there was to understand, she said, and wanted to write some letters.

Mrs. Hackblock sighed gently, and forgave her. No one was ever really angry with Katherine. Roger had been called away to Paris the day before on business: Mrs. Hackblock supposed ‘the dear child’ wanted to write ‘one of her pretty little letters to him.’

‘Then we will wait till to-morrow,’ said she; ‘you will help me then?’

‘To-morrow I am to go home!’

‘Oh, but Mr. Hackblock means to call and see Mrs. Carey to-day, when she is in town, and

beg her to let you stay with us two or three days longer!

Katherine looked up as if about to speak.

‘Don’t say that you would prefer to leave us, Kitty—your visit is such a pleasure to us!’

‘It is a pleasure to me too,’ replied Katherine; but she was rather homesick.

‘You may stay three days more,’ said Mr. Hackblock, when he returned from London.

‘Then I shall have time to make quite an expert housekeeper of you!’ said his wife; and next day, as soon as breakfast was over, she pined to begin.

Katherine was reading a very long letter from her mother, which had just come.

‘Finish your letter, Katherine, and I will order dinner without you; but you must help me with the eggs. By-the-bye, if I am not back here in a quarter of an hour, will you ring for them?’ said Mrs. Hackblock, and went to her kitchen.

Katherine continued to read her mother’s tender and loving letter, in which unselfish affection breathed forth in every line. Suddenly she came to a passage which made her start: ‘That charming but odd Mr. Barrington came to call on me two days ago, just as if nothing had happened. I reproached him a little for having been so unfriendly to us for so long. I really do not quite know what he said in reply; but, somehow or other, he made me feel that we had been foolish to think he had treated us ill—you see, we are quiet people, and do not remember how difficult it must

be for anyone so busily employed as he is to come to us. I asked him to dine with us to-morrow—I thought you, my dear child, would be at home then, and said you would; but Mr. Hackblock has just been here to say that he and his wife want to keep you longer. I feel sorry to have to give you up, but I look forward to Monday.'

Mr. Barrington had called! Then he had kept his word! He was going to dine at her father's house that very evening! What a pity she would not be at home! But why should she not go? Roger was not at Stokesey to miss her—there was nothing to keep her there! Why should she lose the great pleasure of seeing Mr. Barrington? Why stay away from her own dear mother for the sake of marking dates on eggs, or handling clammy pears? Suddenly Mrs. Hackblock startled her by reappearing.

'Katherine! Katherine!' she exclaimed, 'I have been away twenty minutes, and you have forgotten to ring for the eggs!'

'Bother the eggs!' was what Katherine was tempted to reply, but she restrained herself, and said, 'I forgot; I am so sorry. Mrs. Hackblock, my mother is disappointed that I am not going home to-day—I ought to go.'

'Oh, I am sure Mrs. Carey won't mind your staying till Monday!'

'Oh no, I must not stay! I must go to-day. Please let me go!'

The *please* was an immense concession to Mrs. Hackblock's age and position as her future mother.

in-law. As a rule, Katherine merely stated her wishes. Her wish was always law, and none the less so now than heretofore. She said she wanted to go home, and she did go.

CHAPTER XIII.

‘How now, my love? Why are your cheeks so pale?
How chance the roses there to pale so fast?’

Midsummer Night's Dream.

‘A day in April never came so sweet,
To show how costly Summer was at hand.’

Merchant of Venice.

IT was May once more, and Mrs. Carey's sitting-room was enlivened by rays of warm, bright sunshine. Young, golden-green leaves waved against her window, crossing and recrossing, and casting fleeting sunlit shadows on each other. She could watch them from her sofa, and, beyond them, she could see the tops of some trees in the first radiance of spring-green. How green they did look against the bright blue sky—how blue the sky looked against such vivid green!

Mrs. Carey lay still, and enjoyed all she saw; and never once thought how hard it was that she should be obliged to stay within stone walls, when all outside was so fresh and delightful. She was, indeed, thankful to be alive at all. She was still in the same dangerous state as when her doctors

had said that she could not live more than a year, but, strange to say, her disease had made no progress. She and her husband were aware that she was under sentence of death.

Katherine had never allowed herself to believe in the danger; but had at last begun to accept the fact that dear mother must pass through life on a lower level of health than all around her, and to hope that, even on those terms, some happiness worthy of the name might fall to her lot.

They had been sitting together for some time, when Mrs. Carey said, rather anxiously:

‘Katherine, my dearest child, I am sure you are not well. I have been thinking about you for some time. You are so pale, and you don’t talk so much as you used to do. I am afraid you spend too much time in this room of mine. You really ought to go out more!’

‘I do go out more,’ replied Katherine, with a slight change of colour; ‘I always go out at eleven instead of twelve now.’

‘That’s right! Spend as much time in the open air as you possibly can. I always notice that you look much brighter when you come in—always. Don’t look guilty about that, dear child. You hang your head and seem to think it quite a crime to look a little better for being taken out of your mother’s sick-room. It is quite natural that you should do so—quite right to enjoy fresh air. You want change. Now that Roger is away, you have hardly anyone to speak to but myself and poor little Cosette.’

‘Indeed mother, I am perfectly happy. You would not have me go out every night to balls and concerts, and leave you alone, would you?’

‘You are a dear, good girl,’ replied Mrs. Carey, ‘I would have you just as you are!’

‘I am not good,’ said Katherine, with strange warmth. ‘Anything but that.’

‘When does Roger return?’ inquired Mrs. Carey; paying no attention whatever to this petulant outburst.

Katherine and Katherine’s love were the joys of her life; but she feared that Katherine’s own life was a dull one, especially when Roger was away. He had gone over to Hamburg to establish a new branch of the business, and had already been absent for three months.

‘I am not quite sure when he does come,’ replied Katherine calmly. ‘He did say something about being here very soon, but I believe, if he comes now, he will have to go back for a while.’

‘Katherine, my darling, you are a good, loving daughter to me—don’t think that I am not grateful to you for it. You would have been married now, and happy with dear Roger, if you had not been unselfish, and stayed with me. I am afraid——’

‘Oh, mother, mother!’ said Katherine, ‘don’t praise me so when I don’t deserve it. I don’t want to leave you—I should be wretched if I did!’

Mrs. Carey wondered if her poor child had at last arrived at some knowledge of the painful truth, and was aware how short was the time which was left for them to be together. She had always steadily refused to believe it before, but she spoke

now as if aware of the worst. Mrs. Carey thought it wise to change the subject.

‘Go out, dear,’ said she, ‘go and get some roses in your cheeks.’

Katherine got up, slowly and heavily, came to her mother’s side, stooped down, and took her hand, kissed it very humbly, and went out without saying a word. Something in her manner struck Mrs. Carey as strange. At first she puzzled herself to account for it, but why should she do so? If Katherine had recognized the truth, that would explain her changed manner; and perhaps it was as well that she did know—it would make the shock of separation less terrible. Mrs. Carey, who might have been said to exist on the sight of her daughter, was, during her absence, apt to lie on her sofa, thinking how the dear child had looked when she said this, or when she did that, and smiling with pleasure at her little store of recollections of this kind, until Katherine came back and supplied her with fresh food for thought; and this was what she did now.

Katherine’s thoughts were very different. ‘I am a deceitful wretch,’ thought she, as she came downstairs ready dressed to go out, ‘but it’s not quite my fault. If poor dear mother were but like other people, and well, I would not hide a single thought from her; as it is, I must.’ She went slowly down the garden. Cosette tripped steadily after her. Cosette looked up anxiously, Cosette wagged her tail, Cosette did all in her power to obtain some notice; but Katherine never once looked at her. ‘I don’t think I ought to

do this,' thought she, as she walked on towards the park. 'I wonder whether it is very wrong? After all, if it is, it hurts no one but myself!'

She was on her way to meet Lewis Barrington, and she had met him in the same place, and at the same time, nearly every day for many weeks. They had seen a great deal of each other during the winter, both at Mr. Carey's house and elsewhere; they had from time to time met out of doors by accident, and had afterwards met occasionally by arrangement, to consult together in secret about the play he was writing for her. It was so easy to meet when he knew so exactly the hour at which she left home for a walk, and when she adhered to it so punctually. At first there had been no actual appointment made; after a while, when they knew each other better, and when it became more and more vital to their happiness that they should meet, it had seemed so easy and so natural to say, 'Good-bye till to-morrow;' and for many weeks now, neither the one nor the other had ever failed to be there, unless the day was hopelessly wet. And now, instead of spending one hour in the park, they never spent less than two. Katherine knew—could not help knowing—that she loved him more than she had ever imagined it possible to love any human being. Until she knew and loved him she had had no conception of the meaning of the words 'love' and 'happiness.' It was not all happiness. On the rare occasions when she allowed herself to think of the dark side of the affair, she was forced to look in the face the fact that he and she could never be more to each other

than they were now—indeed, could not long be even so much. When Roger returned, things would be different. She belonged to him, and he would assert his claim. She might perhaps sometimes see Mr. Barrington, but never so freely and so happily as now. It was true Roger never expected to see her in the morning—never indeed had time to do so—but still all would be different when he came back. This was a brief space of pure delight which must soon be at an end; the wonder was that it had lasted so long. Meantime, in order to enjoy it more thoroughly, she thrust into the background as much as possible every accusation of her own conscience, every thought which bore on the future.

She never attempted to analyze Barrington's feelings for herself; at least, she only did so to this extent. She felt that he had an affection for her of some kind—of what kind she knew not, and hardly cared to ask. It was enough to make her supremely happy. When she thought on the subject at all, she supposed that he was still engaged to that girl. A cold chill came over her when she remembered her—a chill she herself could not explain. It was not caused by envy, for Barrington had given her more friendship already than she had ever even ventured to hope for; it was not jealousy, for she was too humble to think she could dispute the possession of him with one so superior as this girl must be. It was not guilt at the thought that she herself might possibly be supplanting this other—she did not feel that she was doing so, or dream that such a

thing could be possible. She did not even wish it; no thought or feeling ever dwelt in her mind beyond the one fact that it was a daily delight to be in his company, to look up to him, and to listen to him. He was very good and kind to her. Let him continue to do so. She would enjoy to the full the joy of loving him, and would hide her love from all. She felt quite able to hide it from him, and from everyone else, but wholly unequal to giving it up. Gratitude alone would have made her love him. It was so 'awfully kind of a man of his name and rank in the world to be so good and patient with a poor little stay-at-home, untaught girl like herself.' Just as this thought was passing through her mind for the thousandth time, she met him.

'What do you think!' said he, after he had welcomed her. 'This is the anniversary of the day when I first saw you!'

'Then we have known each other a year,—a whole year!' and having said that, one of those silences so frequent with lovers took place. She was counting up the joys which knowing him had brought into her life; he could always fill up a pause of almost any length, by letting his eyes dwell lingeringly on the delicate lines of that now well-known face.

'It was at our house,' she said, after a while. 'I remember it perfectly. I was just standing with papa inside the doorway. I had done nothing but shake hands with people for about an hour, and was getting tired of it, when I saw Mrs. Dalrymple and a tall gentleman coming. I remember so well

seeing you then; I remember exactly how you looked. I wonder what you thought of me? Wasn't it odd, that we who live so near should never see each other until that day? I wonder what put it into Mrs. Dalrymple's head to bring you?'

Barrington smiled. 'Didn't you know that I asked her to bring me? I had seen you for a minute or two that afternoon, and wanted to see you again.'

Katherine had not known this, and it was another delightful thing to muse on for another silent five minutes. She and he were accustomed to these long silences; to her they made up a great part of the pleasure of her morning walks; to him they frequently came as a safeguard after a moment of too great expansion. She had kept her secret well. He had no conception how much she loved him! He knew that she must have some feeling of regard for him, or she would not have been there; but it fell immeasurably short of what he wished her to have, for almost every time he saw her she let fall some words which showed that she looked on this friendship of theirs as something of limited duration, and knew that the day would soon come when he and she would see each other no more. Roger Hackblock was never actually named, and yet no day went by without something being said which proved that she considered herself bound to him for life. This being the case, Barrington was afraid to say anything which would open her eyes to the true state of his feeling for her, and perhaps drive her to eschew his companionship from that time forth. And yet

each day brought him nearer to the danger of speaking these words. For days he had told himself that he could not keep silence much longer, but must tell her all and risk the very worst that could happen, and never had he been so near to doing this as to-day.

‘Mother says I look ill,’ said Katherine, who felt that something ought to be said, and was unable to originate anything. ‘You don’t think so, do you?’

It would have been absolutely impossible for anyone to have studied the aspect of her face—coloured as it suddenly was by a rosy blush at the thought that she had thus unintentionally asked him to look at her—and have said that there was any hint of illness in it; on the contrary, it was warmly tinged with the very hue of health. He could not tell whether her eyes were bright or not, for almost before he could look up, hers had sought the ground.

‘Oh no; you do not look ill. You do not feel so, I hope,’ he added anxiously.

‘I? Not the very least. I’ll tell you who does look rather ill, though—that is poor dear Nancy.’

‘Yes, but she is stronger than she was. She has been better since you sent the carriage every day to take her for a drive—that was very kind of you!’ said he tenderly. He did not feel brotherly to Katherine, but he felt very much so towards Nancy, and, independently of any other sentiment for Katherine, was deeply grateful to her for her thoughtfulness on this point.

She put his gratitude away from her as undeserved, and said, 'Oh, not kind at all; the horses want exercise—the carriage is never used. I don't care to go out without mother. Nancy may as well have the good of it as not. How odd it is that Mr. Davenport does not sometimes get anxious about her!'

'She is in no danger,' said Barrington. 'She only wants a little luxury now and then. I used to be afraid that she was consumptive, but she is all right. Won't she be in a state of delight on Monday, when she goes to the Royal Academy and sees her husband's pictures in such capital places! He has two on the line; I saw him on the varnishing-day, and he told me so. If that man's fortune is made, it will all be due to you, and to your goodness in sitting to him.'

Katherine smiled. That had been the one good deed of her life—the one and only occasion on which she had made herself do a thing which she disliked for the sake of another person.

Presently she said: 'I am going to the Academy on Monday with the Davenports. Mrs. Hackblock is going to take me to the Private View this afternoon, but I want to go on Monday too, for the sake of hearing what poor little Nancy says;' and as she uttered these words, she felt that meant seeing Barrington there also.

'You are going on Monday? At what time?' he asked.

'In the afternoon; about two, I believe.'

She watched him as he made a mental note of this one more opportunity of being in her

company. She felt a happy warmth at her heart. It was very delightful that he should care so much to be with her. Suddenly she thought of that *other*. Was she—could she be wronging *her*? It was not so strange that Katherine should put this question to herself as it may appear. Her admiration for Barrington was so unbounded, her trust in him so implicit, that to suppose he could in any way behave ill to this lady, or indeed to anyone, was to treat him with a disrespect which was simply monstrous; it was so certain that he could have no feeling for herself which was inconsistent with his own high sense of honour and with his plighted troth. Not for anything in the wide world would Katherine have doubted him; nevertheless, when all at once it became so evident that he intended to go to the Royal Academy next Monday afternoon, simply because she herself was going, she could not prevent the thought of that *other*, rushing unbidden into her mind. It was impossible not to think of that girl who had such a strong will and strong influence over Lewis Barrington, and also such a strong claim on him. The force of the necessity which made Katherine think of her, made her for a time forget herself and her own relations with him, and say boldly:

‘Mr. Barrington, you once told me that you were not quite free to see me, that you could not come to our house as you liked. How is it that you can do as you like now? Does she not object to it now?’

‘I dare say she does, but I told her I could not be bound by promises. But I did not know

that you knew about it. Has she ever spoken to you of it?' he asked, in the greatest surprise, for he was thinking of the promise he had made to Mrs. Dalrymple, and she had assured him that she would not speak of that to Katherine.

'Spoken to me!' echoed Katherine, much bewildered. 'What do you mean? Who is she? How could she speak to me, when I don't know her?'

'You don't know her! You know her quite well!'

'Then do tell me who she is!' said Katherine, eager and not eager, pressing for knowledge which, on the whole, she would have given a great deal not to have.

'Mrs. Dalrymple, of course,' said he.

'Mrs. Dalrymple! But she has got a husband!'

'Why should she not have a husband?'

'Because—because—it can't be Mrs. Dalrymple! Didn't you say that you were not quite free to do as you liked, because—' here she hesitated painfully.

'Do go on,' said he kindly; 'you need not mind what you say to me; and it is so important that we should understand each other.'

'I can't say more!' said Katherine, who was conscious that tears of shame were forcing themselves into her eyes, and feared that he must think her a silly, childish schoolgirl. She had so lately been a schoolgirl, that this was a most terrible thought to her, and it gave her courage to say, 'Yes, I will tell you.' And then, under the protection of

firmness: 'I understood—I thought I understood, I mean—that you were engaged to a girl, or a grown-up lady perhaps, who did not quite like you to be too much with other people—girls, you know.'

'You did?' said he, in amazement. 'You thought that? How could I be engaged when I love——' here he checked himself abruptly—most abruptly; and Katherine, though she never raised her eyes from the ground, knew that his were piercing her through and through. His gaze lasted so long that she faltered, and grew crimson under it.

'Won't you even look at me?' said he.

She made a great effort and looked in his face; their eyes met and told all.

She recovered first, and said very nervously: 'I was wrong, you say; I beg your pardon.'

'Wrong! you were never more wrong in your life! I engaged? Impossible! I who——'

'Don't let us say another word about it, Mr. Barrington, I entreat you,' interrupted Katherine, in anxious haste. 'It was my mistake, that's all. I think I must go home.'

She was so pale, and grew so much paler each moment, that he was afraid she was going to faint.

'You are not angry with me?' he asked, though it seemed cruel to say more.

By a great effort she was able to answer 'No,' and, having obtained so much, he ceased to press her further. He made her take his arm, and gently guided her into the path which led

homewards; and then, as they slowly and painfully moved onwards, he received some portion of his punishment. The sight of her drooping head, her faltering steps, her wan white face, with all its youth and health driven away from it by him and his rash words, stabbed him to the heart. She was such a child, and had done what was, perhaps, wrong, in such perfect innocence and ignorance. Now she knew what she had done! He had suddenly disclosed to her sight the precipice on which she had been amusing herself so thoughtlessly, and had brought the first chill blight on her happy young life!

He had time enough for reflection; for, as he took her back to her own home, no word crossed her lips. Was she wholly unable to speak to him? Was she angry with him? He must have a word of some kind from her before they parted; for, let what would happen—in spite of conscience, and of her engagement, of her regret and penitence—in spite of all, and everything, this woman should be his.

After all, what had he said to shock her so now?—Nothing. Not one word of love had actually been spoken. There was no reason why they should not meet next day as if nothing had happened. Nothing had happened, except something which was so delightful, that his brain reeled when he thought of it—that one look which had passed between them, and had told so much. How much had it told to her? he wondered. How much of what those dear eyes of hers had said to him would she abide by? If he could but find

some way to induce her to say one word which would show that she had not made up her mind never to see him again!

They reached the green garden-door. She quietly withdrew from his arm her hand, which had been lying on it like a dead hand no longer capable of any feeling; and, with her face still downcast, and studiously averted from him, began to search helplessly in her pocket for the latch-key. At last she found it, and tried to open the door. She could not, and felt that she could not; so, with a sickly attempt at something like a smile, she turned and put the key into Barrington's hand, as if saying, 'Help me. Do it for me.'

He opened the door without delay, and then said:

'Are you better?'

'Much,' said she, though she was not; and then she prepared to go.

'One moment,' said he, in desperation. 'I did so want to speak to you about the play; and have neglected to do so until too late. I must have a little talk with you about it before I can get on any further.'

He thought that if she said, 'We will talk about it to-morrow,' it would be a sign that all was still well between them; but if she seemed disinclined to hear more of it, all would be over. She faltered a moment, and said:

'I can't think now; I——'

'Oh, not now!' said he, overjoyed; 'I don't mean now, when you are so ill. I am not so selfish as that.'

‘Some other day, then. Good-bye!’
And thus she left him, gliding away like a
pale shadow.

CHAPTER XIV.

‘For many men that stumble at the threshold,
Are well foretold that danger lurks within.’
King Henry VI.

‘Riddling confession finds but riddling shrift.’
Romeo and Juliet.

KATHERINE crept into the house, made her way to her own room, and flung herself wearily on the bed. She was simply overwhelmed by the mental emotion she had undergone. She could not think at all; she felt almost annihilated. Her mind was bruised; her spirit faint: her body powerless. She drew the curtain before her, and lay quite still, wondering if ever again she would be able to think clearly.

After some time, a servant came to call her to her lonely little luncheon.

‘I want no luncheon,’ she said. ‘I want nothing; only let me be quiet.’

‘But you look so ill, Miss Katherine!’ exclaimed the frightened girl. ‘What am I to say to Mrs. Carey if she asks where you are?’

‘Say I am rather tired. Be sure not to let her imagine that I am ill. I am not ill. Promise not to say I am.’

The maid promised, and stole away. Katherine's pale face alarmed her—no one had ever seen Miss Carey so tired or so ill before—and her one thought was, 'She's going like her mother.'

Katherine lay where she was; but more than an hour passed before any thought of any kind relieved the blankness of her mind. When she did begin to think, the thoughts which presented themselves were happy and soothing. There she lay, recalling all that had taken place that morning—seeing once more that look in his eyes as she had seen it then—hearing once more the words which he had spoken. He had looked at her very strangely—had spoken very strangely, too. She did not quite know what he had meant; but she knew that for words and looks, such as those which he had given her, she would have gone barefooted to the end of the earth. Was it—could it be possible—that he loved her? He had said he loved some one; was she the one? She did not know; but she thought of his words and his looks, until she forgot to think of anything else. They were the very breath of life to her—dearer far than life itself. On other days, after seeing Barrington, she had almost always come home reproaching herself for behaving with something very like treachery to Roger Hackblock. To-day she had no room in her mind for any thought but one—not only had she forgotten that she had promised to go out that very afternoon with his mother, but she had forgotten that there was such a person as his mother in the world.

There was a loud peal at the bell. She

vaguely heard it; but it never occurred to her that it was Mrs. Hackblock, who had come to fetch her. What a loud peal it was! It roused even Lewis Barrington on the opposite side of the street. He heard it, and looked out of his window, and saw Mrs. Hackblock's shining, newly-varnished carriage, and magnificent pair of greys, and knew that she had come to take Katherine Carey to the Private View of the Royal Academy. He rose up in great irritation, and said to himself that she ought to teach that bedizened footman of hers how to ring a bell properly! 'Blacking can't be expected to teach its servants anything of the kind!' was his next scornful thought; and then he recollected that the Careys were blacking-people, too; and that even 'the most immaculate white and red' of his beloved Katherine's cheek was nurtured on that repulsive and Circean-looking compound. Was Katherine going to the Private View with that gaunt commercial-woman, who always wore dresses which looked as if smeared with the contents of five or six bottles of Hackblock, Higgins, and Carey's best and costliest article? Would Katherine be well enough to go? If she did, what a pity he could not go too! He was almost certain that Katherine would not. He was right. Mrs. Hackblock said she would 'just get out and say a few words to Mrs. Carey, while Miss Carey was putting on her bonnet;' but was told Miss Carey had a very bad headache, and could not go out.

'She will be better perhaps if she makes an effort,' said Mrs. Hackblock to Katherine's maid,

who came forward to endorse the man-servant's assurances. 'I know the air will do her head a great deal of good, and I'll run upstairs to her room for a minute, and tell her so!'

The girl looked dismayed when she heard of this intention of Mrs. Hackblock's, but that lady's silks were so strikingly luminous and rich of texture, and the laces and fringes which adorned them were used in such generous abundance, that it was out of the question to try to place any impediments in her way.

'Ill, my dearest Katherine?' said she, as with hasty steps she swept across the room to a chair by the sufferer's side. 'What is it? A headache?'

'Yes, a little headache—only a little one, but it is very bad!'

'I see it is, poor dear! You had better get up and come out with me. We will drive once round the park before we go to the pictures—that will cure you.'

'Oh no; I'll stay here, please.'

'But I can't let you stay here, all alone! I don't like to think of your doing that. Suppose I send the carriage back for my knitting, and stay with you for an hour or so? I must have something in my hands, but I can easily do that.'

Katherine shook her head.

'Don't shake your head. I am sure that it will be an immense comfort to have some one like me with you. We can have a happy little talk together about Roger.'

'Not to-day; I couldn't, thank you,' murmured poor Katherine.

'Head too bad? Well, I won't insist. I am very good about not insisting on things against people's will. Are you sure you go out enough? Katherine, it is a duty to go out—don't forget that. You are apt to forget your duties of that kind, I fear!'

Katherine hid her face. Every word Mrs. Hackblock said had its own separate and subtle sting of reproach.

'I'll put some eau de Cologne on your forehead. Have you had any sal volatile?'

Faintly, but firmly, Katherine declined all these remedies.

'But what will Roger say if he comes home and finds you ill? You looked so well when he went away. He won't expect to find you changed.'

Katherine hastily assured her that her headache would be gone in an hour or two.

'I dare say it will, but when you are well we must keep you so. I will go to your mother on my way downstairs, and tell her that you must go out more. You must go out, if it is only for a short walk in the park. I wish you had some one to walk with, though. Here you are, in this dull house from morning till night, seeing no one but your father and mother. I dare be certain that you have not exchanged a word with anyone else for days. Now, have you, dear? I wish Roger was back; he makes things much livelier for you. I am old, and no good, and you hardly ever see anyone who is not old.'

'You are not old; you are very good,' murmured the unhappy girl.

'Oh, I'm no good whatsoever, except to scold you a little now and then. By-the-bye, I was going to give you a little scolding now, if you had been well, my darling. Roger—I had a long letter from him this morning—complains that you have not written one of your dear letters to him for days—I don't know how many. I was going to make you promise to write at once.'

'Does Roger call them "dear" little letters?' she inquired in some surprise, for not only was this epithet warmer than he was wont to employ, but also she was afraid that her recent letters had been entirely undeserving of such a description.

'No, it's my word; but I am sure Roger likes to have them. You will write to him, won't you? Not to-day—you can't to-day.'

'No, I can't to-day,' Katherine repeated drearily.

'I know you can't. You are not able, and I forbid it.'

To Mrs. Hackblock, a letter seemed to represent a literary effort of appreciable magnitude. So she again said: 'You are not fit to do it yet, but I will give up a morning or an afternoon to him. Is there anything you want to say to him—anything that really ought to be said to him at once, I mean?'

Mrs. Hackblock meant nothing particular, she was only forecasting a little in case Katherine should not be well enough to write even on the following day; but her chance speech probed

Katherine's conscience in the tenderest and most injured part.

Was there anything which really ought to be said to Roger at once? Alas! indeed there was!

'Think carefully, dear,' said Mrs. Hackblock.

Katherine was thinking—thinking hard. She loved Barrington. She did not love Roger. Now that she had at last learnt what love was, she knew that she had no feeling for him which was one whit stronger than friendly interest. The sight of him had never quickened the pulses of her heart by even so much as one beat.

Mrs. Hackblock was rather surprised at her silence, and said: 'Come, Katherine dear, I must go; tell me something or other to say to Roger. I am sure the horses must be tired of waiting.'

'I will write myself! I must write!' murmured Katherine.

'Good-bye then, my darling,' said Mrs. Hackblock, and she kissed her tenderly, and went.

'Is there anything which really ought to be said to Roger?' repeated Katherine, dwelling on those words with deep emotion. 'Yes. Oh, how I wish it were but said!'

She got up, smoothed her hair, and went slowly and thoughtfully down to her mother's room.

Mrs. Carey looked up in anxious surprise, and said: 'Oh, Katherine, I am so glad to see you! I have done nothing but reproach myself ever since I was told that you had a bad headache. It's my fault! I almost drove you out of doors

this morning when you didn't want to go; and I saw you didn't.'

'I did want to go. I was just going when you sent me,' said Katherine, longing to tell all.

'It is such a pity you went!' continued Mrs. Carey. 'It would have been so very much better for you, if you had but stayed in!'

A strange pain and fear thrilled through Katherine's sad heart. How ominous and how apposite were most of the words which were addressed to her this day! She earnestly hoped that these of her mother's were not true—in any sense deeper than at first appeared. She assured her that she was well again. She went and sat down on a low foot-stool by her side, but she half turned away her face from her.

'Mother,' said she faintly, 'I want to talk to you about something—something I can't help making myself unhappy about; a little unhappy, I mean. Don't be afraid that it is anything bad.'

Mrs. Carey's hand stole softly into Katherine's, and held it tightly in a warm and loving grasp.

'It is about Roger; sometimes I am afraid I do not love him properly. Would it be a very dreadful thing if I really did not, and could not go on being engaged to him?'

Mrs. Carey started back in great distress, and still greater surprise, and exclaimed: 'You don't mean to say that there is any chance of such a dreadful thing as that happening? What would your father say!'

'That's the worst of it! I think girls should choose for themselves when they are asked to

marry a man—they have to live with him, not the fathers and mothers. You and father chose Roger for me! I myself had no voice in the matter!’

Mrs. Carey gently drew away her hand from Katherine’s and hid her eyes with it, but could not hide some tears that trickled out from beneath her fingers.

‘Mother! Mother!’ exclaimed Katherine. ‘Don’t do that! It is terrible to make one’s own mother cry! I never said I wanted to break off with Roger! I was only wondering whether I loved him enough. Oh, mother! don’t go on crying—you kill me!’

‘Assure me that you have not changed towards Roger, or I shall never be happy again! I have been so happy in the thought that though I myself was going to be taken from you, darling, you would not feel my loss so much as might be feared; for you would have a good, kind husband, and his father and mother would be parents to you.’

‘But I want to keep you,’ sobbed Katherine.

‘You cannot keep me, and losing me may mean losing your dear father, too; he is an old man, Katherine, too old to adjust himself to a new kind of life when I am gone. If you give up Roger, I shall have the agony of thinking that very soon you may be quite alone in the world.’

Katherine hid her face against the corner of the sofa and wept quietly; but in the midst of her tears she made a great effort and said: ‘Mother, I am not going to give him up, or do anything which would distress you.’

'It would distress me terribly,' said Mrs. Carey. 'When you are as old as I am, and have daughters of your own, you will know how dreadful it is to a poor mother to think of leaving the darling of her heart alone and unprotected, and will understand how I snatched at the change of marrying you to dear Roger, whose parents have loved you almost as their own daughter ever since you were born. They could never love any other daughter-in-law as they will love you, and you could never be so much at home with anyone as with them. Katherine dear, it is quite hard enough to have to die and leave you, when I know I am leaving you safe and happy. What would it be to lie here day after day, feeling my own life going so fast, and knowing nothing of what yours would be after I was parted from you? I should spend my time in imagining all kinds of dreadful things happening to you; and I should be doubly wretched, because I should know that it was all my own doing!'

'Your own doing? Dear mother, how could that be?'

'Because, a year ago, when you accepted Roger, you were quite happy, and willing to marry him at once, and I begged him to wait. I entreated him to leave you with me while I lived. You remember that the doctors told us then that I could not live more than a year, and I was selfish and couldn't give you up while that year lasted.'

'The doctors know nothing about it! I did not believe what they said at the time; and now they are proved to have been wrong. You are

just as well as you were when they said that; and you will live many a year yet, thank God!

‘That I certainly shall not! Katherine, my days are numbered, and I know it.’

‘Oh, mother, no! Oh, what dreadful things these are to talk of! I can’t bear it.’

‘We won’t talk of them. Only relieve my mind about dear Roger. What did you mean by what you said just now? Do you really love him less?’

‘Oh no, I don’t,’ replied Katherine; and she spoke truly, for she had never loved him at all. But even if it had been false she would have said it, for she was resolved at any cost not to embitter her mother’s last months of life.

‘Thank God!’ murmured Mrs. Carey. ‘If this engagement were broken off it would almost kill your father. I am certain it would! He wishes you to marry Roger even more than I do.’

Katherine shivered; each moment she felt herself more and more enmeshed by chains which were irksome to her.

‘Give me some sal volatile, Katherine. I feel quite faint,’ said Mrs. Carey.

‘Yes, mother,’ said Katherine, rising in haste to obey; ‘and have no fear about Roger. I love him quite as much as ever I did; I was only afraid that that might not be quite enough.’

‘Oh, all girls take fancies of that kind. You love him quite enough. You have always been very happy together.’

Katherine drew a long breath. She had

narrowly escaped a very great danger—that of making her poor mother really ill—but she had lost this opportunity of telling her the truth.

CHAPTER XV.

‘She leads in solitude her youthful hours,
Her nights are restlessness, her days are pain:
Oh, when will health and pleasure come again?’

LANDOR.

‘YOU and my father chose Roger for me; I myself had no voice in the matter.’ These had been Katherine’s words; and though the fact was not absolutely in accordance with them, it was more so than Mrs. Carey liked to think. Katherine had uttered them boldly, and had believed them; but when she retreated to her own room again and thought over what she had said, she was compelled to own that there was less truth in that assertion than was altogether satisfactory to her own feelings. She had not only accepted Roger Hackblock of her own free will—for no pressure had been brought to bear on her stronger than strong persuasion—but she had also for some time been very happy and proud of him. So it had been before she was so fascinated by Lewis Barrington, and so perhaps it would be again, when her friendship with him came to an end, as

only too surely it must come. Half a dozen words with her mother had convinced Katherine that her engagement had gone too far, and that the two families were much too deeply anxious about it to suffer it to be broken off. There was no contending against her mother. She would do her best to feel for Roger as she used to do. When she saw Mr. Barrington again, she would be much more guarded with him. Roger would come back, and all would once more be as of old. So she told herself, and so she almost believed. On Saturday morning the sun shone brightly, but Katherine never left the house. She was perfectly well, she said, but she had no wish to go out.

On Sunday she and her father went as usual to church, and as usual took a short walk in the park. By chance Mr. Carey chose the very path where she and Barrington had walked so short a while before. Her eyes rested on the same familiar objects, her feet grazed the same pebbles—all was the same—but with such a difference! What was she to do on Monday? She thought of this during the night-watches. In round terms she told herself that it would be wrong to meet Barrington again—so wrong that it must not be thought of. Hard as it was to deny herself this great pleasure, it must be done. But how was she to endure her dull sad life, when compelled to forego the only happiness she had? A compromise suggested itself which made her quite happy. She would not renounce the pleasure of seeing Barrington altogether, but she would not see him for some time to come. She would allow a little time

for him to forget what had occurred, and then meet him as usual.

Soothed by this thought, she fell asleep, and slept so long that she was late for breakfast. She and her father always enjoyed that meal together. When she went down, he was absorbed in the *Times*; so she began to read a letter from Nancy, written on the preceding Saturday.

'Frank and I, my dearest Katherine, will call for you on our way to the R. A. at two on Monday; please be ready. We shall have had luncheon, thank you; for I know that as you read that we are to be with you at that time, you are mentally offering it to us. Frank is in such spirits about his pictures! Have you heard how well they are hung? I can't help hoping that they are certain to sell. I have persuaded him to put a good price on them, and tell him he is sure to get it. He says he would much rather not sell them, except to truly appreciative buyers. Such buyers are rare, but Frank is terribly sanguine. He says that I am terribly faint-hearted and unbelieving. Can you imagine why? Because I was rather cross with him, poor fellow, about something he did this afternoon. You see, dear Katherine, those pictures may not sell, so don't you agree with me in thinking that it was rather naughty of him to go out all unbeknown to me, and buy me two magnificent necklaces—one amber, and it must have cost five or six guineas, and the other, lapis lazuli—and I so badly off for a new set of flannel-petticoats, as I told him when he came home? He informed me that I had a prisoned soul which

refused to rise. I said I liked to see the steps. Of course I can't be really angry with him, any more than he with me; so don't imagine that we have been saying unkind things to each other. He says that he has made four hundred guineas already by buying that bed; he will count up the money as if the truly appreciative purchasers had already been found. Well, Frank says he has made that, and will make the value of those necklaces twenty times over, by painting me wearing them. I dare say all will be right, and the amber is lovely; but, dear Katherine, you must sympathize with me. Be warned by me—never marry a man like my dear Frank, who will steal all my cinnamon to burn in his studio fire, and make the room smell sweet and sacrificial. Only too much so, say I, and then he laughs, and says I am hopelessly practical! He declares that he means to make it a condition that whoever buys those pictures shall keep a lamp burning beneath them day and night. I hope you do not require to have it explained to you that this is not intended as a tribute to the merit of the painter, but as a homage to the beauty of the dear lady who played the part of model to him. I say, supposing the pictures are bought by a dealer, will a dealer engage to keep a couple of lamps continually burning before them? On which my Frank flies out at once, and swears by all his gods, not forgetting his pretty goddesses as well, that no dealer shall be allowed to purchase any attempt, however abortive, to delineate a woman of your surpassing beauty. I maintain that a dealer's cheque will buy just as many nice things

as anyone else's cheque. He says I do not look on things in a high, religious spirit. I, on the contrary, affirm——'

Here Mr. Carey interrupted Katherine's reading by exclaiming:

'Oh! my word, Katherine, but that is a long letter! Who can have taken the trouble to sit down and cover that paper?'

'Nancy Davenport. She wants me to go to the Academy with them, and the rest of it is all about her husband's pictures. Papa, couldn't you buy them? It would be dreadful for the poor Davenports if no one bought them! I wish you would, dear.'

'I'd like nothing better; but it wouldn't do. You are quite forgetting that Mr. Hackblock wants them. He would take it very much amiss if I stepped in and interfered with his arrangements.'

'I hate his arrangements! Why does he not buy them at once, if he wants them? He has behaved very ill——'

'Gently, Katherine,' interposed Mr. Carey mildly; but in his heart he did not think his daughter was saying one word too much.

The fact was, that Mr. Hackblock had been twice to see the two pictures, and had privately said to the Careys that he liked them both particularly, and intended to purchase them. He had, however, expressed no admiration to the artist himself; partly because 'he didn't approve of making young artists conceited,' and partly because he thought if he seemed indifferent he would probably get them for a less price.

'He wants two hundred guineas apiece for them now,' Mr. Hackblock had said, 'and he is an uppish fellow to imagine any work of his worth half that sum. I don't deny that they are very good pictures, and most charming likenesses of dear Katherine; but I'll not give two hundred for what I can get for one by waiting; and I will wait, and you will see that he will be only too glad to take half-price!'

Katherine detested this spirit, so did Mr. Carey; but unfortunately it was only too probable that Mr. Hackblock's little stratagem would be crowned with success.

'I hope he will lose them!' exclaimed Katherine. 'It will serve him right if he does! Do buy them, papa—how cruel you are to say "no" to me!'

'I should offend Hackblock mortally! I have so often heard him say he means to have them. He counts on getting them, and he will, too; for Davenport has never yet had the luck to sell a big picture, except that one he sold to me; and that, you know, was a commission.'

'Never mind about Mr. Hackblock—buy them, father; you must.'

Mr. Carey shook his head, and said:

'Oh no, I always let Hackblock have his own way! I could not buy them after what he has said.'

'Why should you always let him have his own way? You are as good as he.'

'I? Oh no, not in the office!'

'Yes, you are.'

‘He found all the money!’

‘Let him go on finding it! You do twice as much work as he, and you have all the brains!’

‘You know nothing whatever about it, my dear young woman!’ said Mr. Carey, vainly struggling to conceal his delight at her words, and thinking, with intense satisfaction, that that girl was ‘a regular chip of the old block, and somehow or other always contrived to hit the right nail on the head.’

‘You are going to the Academy with the Davenports, you say?’ continued Mr. Carey, when he had recovered himself.

‘I never said so—I said they had asked me.’

‘Well, darling, that’s the same thing, isn’t it? You are going, I suppose?’

‘No, I am not—not to-day.’

‘Oh, do go! I’ll meet you there; and then we will see what can be done about the pictures.’

‘No, I think not. You can do all that is necessary without me. I am not going. Don’t say any more about it. I don’t seem to care about going there to-day.’

Katherine’s likings were so studied by the family, that these words always acted as a spell—if she did not wish to go, she should not be asked.

‘Then I’ll go without you,’ said he meekly. ‘I’ll go about two. If Hackblock is there, I’ll advise him to settle the matter at once. Dear me, what are two hundred pounds to him? By-the-bye, you had better send a telegram to the Davenports to stop their coming. Just tell them

not to call for you; I shall see them there, and will explain that your capricious little ladyship did not care to go out.'

Katherine sighed. She had made a great sacrifice to virtue, and it was spoken of as a thing of small account—a mere passing caprice. However, her father did not know—never must know. She went and sat with her mother; but, when eleven o'clock drew near, she retreated quietly—she wished to spare herself the pain of having to resist her mother's entreaties to go and take a walk in the park, backed by assurances that these walks did her more good than anything else; for she always came back looking twice as well as when she went out. She could make the sacrifice; but she did not feel equal to the effort of reiterating that she stayed in because she hated going out.

Seeing her leave the room about the usual time, Mrs. Carey supposed that the dear child had gone to dress for her walk. The 'dear child' had, however, crept into a desolate and uninhabited front bed-room, where, quaking lest a housemaid, whom she had just passed on the stairs on her way to lightly top-dress one of the rooms entrusted to her charge, should, for some reason or other, stray into this, and espy what her young mistress was doing, Katherine placed herself by the window, and looked through the folds of a muslin blind at the house opposite. There could surely be no great harm in trying to catch one little glimpse of the man with whom she might have spent so many happy hours that very day, if she had not sacrificed inclination to duty? She had

given up her walk in the park; she had given up going to the Royal Academy, where she would have seen him, and all from a sense of duty. 'Duty' is a high-sounding word, and Katherine liked to use it. She had no practical acquaintance with the meaning of the term, and mighty little occasion for the exercise of the virtue. What kept her away from the park and Mr. Barrington was much more a certain sense of shame, consequent on the laying bare his and her secret, than any sense of duty. How could it be duty, when she was even now looking forward to the time when she might safely assume that he had forgotten what had occurred on that momentous Friday morning, and meet him again on the safer and less familiar footing of an earlier period of their acquaintance?

A little before eleven, the door of the house opposite opened, and he came out. Once he glanced at No. 15, but not with the air of a man who expects to see a sight for which his eyes are longing. How should it be so?—never had he seen her at any window there. She shrank back, feeling that folded muslin was terribly insufficient to shroud a girl occupied as she was; but he gave no second look. How short was this pleasure which she had procured for herself! In another minute he was out of the street; and she was left there with the regret she had felt before, increased twentyfold by the sight of him on his way to meet her. Not to-day, not next day, nor for many days to come must she go there. How could she look in his face? How speak in a natural voice?

She, who had let him perceive how his words and looks had affected her—she, who had learnt so much from them? She sat idly in the window. She knew he would wait for her till the very last moment; but, when one o'clock came, he would surely return.

At one he did return, looking crest-fallen and disappointed. She could see it in his walk; she could see it in his face. This time he scrutinized the exterior of No. 1 most narrowly. There was something in his appearance which cut Katherine to the heart. He looked sad and reproachful, and as if he felt he was being very hardly dealt with. He entered his house, and almost immediately afterwards she, from her high window, saw what she could not have seen had she been down below, saw him draw his chair to a place near the window from whence he, unobserved himself, could observe the Careys' front-door. 'Ah, he knows that he has nothing to expect from the garden-door; he is going to try what can be obtained from the front. He thinks, of course, that I am going to the Academy.'

Katherine was at length forced by fear of detection to abandon her watch, but shortly after two she stole back for one more look. He had just pushed back his chair in disgust at having passed such an unproductive hour, and was about to leave the house. She saw him leave it; saw him get into a hansom, and divined that he had come to the conclusion that Burlington House was the place to find her. She felt bitterly disappointed at the thought that she might have been there.

CHAPTER XVI.

Duchess. Out upon pictures! If they be so tedious,
Give me things with some life.'

MIDDLETON'S *Witches*.

'I yield to the necessity which translates itself into crown-pieces for me.'—BALZAC'S *Letters to his Sister*.

POETS and painters, ancient and modern, have disdained to take for their theme the anguish of the lover who, parted from his mistress by fate, seeks her even inside the gates of hell. It is with no feeling of disrespect to the great Exhibition of our country, that I hint that Barrington's labours when he went to Burlington House on its opening day in the spring-time of the year, to try to obtain a sight of his Katherine, bore some faint resemblance to the heroic lover who sought his Eurydice. To say so is, of course, to compare small things with great; and the difficulties which Barrington encountered were but petty and vexatious. Nevertheless, they were infinitely exasperating; and, besides that, wholly without the compensation of constituting a claim to heroism. And yet, though the guardians of the door were less terrible than those who confronted Orpheus, they were just as inexorable. More so, indeed, for his skill in a sister art obtained Orpheus a free admission; but no such plea would have obtained this favour for Barrington. Inside, too, the crowd

was as dense as in Pluto's own domain, the heat almost as insupportable, the apparent hopelessness of the search as heart-rending. It was early in the afternoon when Barrington entered, but there was an almost impenetrable crowd in the vestibule; and he knew that there were almost a dozen such rooms, with outlets into each other in due course, but also with subtle opportunities for the pursued person to turn, and re-turn, and double on his steps, so that no pursuer could follow. Even when two people are aware of each other's presence and doing their very best to meet; even when they have a large number of acquaintances in common, who can assist the search by saying where the missing person was last seen, the crowd is so great and the power of turning such information to account so impeded by it, that hours may pass in unavailing pursuit. Barrington and Katherine had few friends in common—hardly any. The Dalrymples were the only real ones, and Barrington rejoiced to think that they were now in another quarter of the globe. He began his search in a business-like way by looking in his catalogue to see where Davenport's pictures were hung. They were in the first and second rooms. He did not think that Katherine was one of the beauties who are usually to be seen on the opening days, hanging about the rooms in which their portraits are exhibited, dressed in the very garments in which they sat for them, wearing even the very necklaces; but he did think that he was more likely to hear something about her if he stayed there himself. He had frequently seen the pictures in

Davenport's studio—it was well that he had, for he certainly could not have seen much of them now. Through an opening in the tightly-compacted mass of people before him, he caught one delicious glimpse of the soft, warm colouring of Katherine's lovely face—one glimpse of her pliant figure as rendered by the artist. He did not want to see more—he detested the idea of sharing the pleasure of sight with all those would-be critics and self-elected connoisseurs. He heard one gentleman say, after consulting his catalogue: 'Miss Carey; oh, the same girl who was making hay in that picture in the other room. Well, I advise her to make her hay while the sun shines; these professional beauties have a very short reign of it!'

Barrington scowled at the speaker; he could have knocked him down for applying that singularly insulting term to such a girl as Katherine. It drove him out of those two first rooms. He spent nearly an hour in pushing his way through the others; all in vain was the suffering he underwent—she was nowhere to be found. He could not bring himself to look at pictures—they stared in his face whichever way he turned—he was in no humour to look at such things; he was weary of the sight of brightly coloured canvases; he had not come to see them, but Katherine. Still he could not find her; and all that he gained by that hard morning's work was two bits of knowledge, the result of his own observation. First, that whenever it comes to be a question of fighting your way step by step, women are much more deadly antagonists than men, being more free in

the use of their shoulders and elbows and less regardful of existing rights of standing room. Secondly, that, broadly speaking, the bad pictures in an exhibition give quite as much pleasure as the good ones.

Having made up his mind that both these propositions were sound, he returned to the first room as the shortest route home; for he was sick of pictures and picture-lovers, and longed to get away from them. This time he saw Messrs. Hackblock and Carey standing near the doorway, engaged in earnest conversation. Truth compels me to add that he drew near them at once, in the hope of picking up some fragment of information about Katherine. He was a stranger to Mr. Hackblock, and had a great wish to remain so. Mr. Carey was too much absorbed by what he himself was saying to observe him.

'I am as much disappointed as you are,' said he to his partner. 'You must know very well that I would have given any sum to make my own of those two pictures! They are life-like! Twice as good as the thing he did for me! I should have bought both when I first saw them, only you seemed so determined to have them.'

'So I was. I was quite determined.'

'Then why not secure them when you had a chance? You have disappointed yourself and me too, for I have no hesitation in saying that I would have given Davenport his own price!'

'Keep cool, Carey, I beg of you,' replied Mr. Hackblock, in a quiet but irritating manner, which had the effect of making Mr. Carey twice as warm

as before. 'Keep cool, my dear fellow. There you go, fretting and fuming, instead of trying to consider what we ought to do. I did quite right to hold back. It was not that I objected to the price—why should I? It's nothing to what I do give for pictures, and for some which do not possess half the interest for me that these do. It wasn't the cash, I assure you. It was just because that Davenport is such a conceited fool, that I did not care to make him more so. He would have gone about telling everybody that he had placed two pictures in my collection—that's what he would have done; and mind, I don't care a pin for his silly affected work! I only wanted these things because Katherine sat for them.'

'Of course——' began Mr. Carey sadly.

'Now don't pull a long face, Carey. I'll have them still. They are bought by Killigrew, the dealer. We can buy them of him, and Davenport need never know that we cared to have them. Let us see if we can find Killigrew; he is sure to be somewhere about.'

Barrington had, of course, only listened to the first few words said by these moneyed gentlemen; he had then seen that he was not at that moment likely to learn anything that he did want to know, and extremely likely to hear something not intended for his ears. After all, the Davenports were the people to find, for it was with them that Katherine had arranged to come. At last he found them. They, poor things, had been carefully avoiding the rooms in which the three pictures most interesting to them were hung. Nancy looked very happy,

and happy she was, and lovely too, in her newly acquired lapis lazuli necklace. Before Barrington could approach Davenport, Mr. Killigrew, the dealer, rushed up fervently to him, and in honeyed words informed him that early that morning he had had the 'great good fortune to secure his two most beautiful and highly original pictures, and begged to congratulate him on them.' They were 'admirable! Full of rhythmic impulse, replete with tenderness of tone, and delicately adjusted values.' Davenport was dazzled by such glowing language, but still more so by the fact that Mr. Killigrew thought sufficiently well of him and of his art, to dive down into his treasury of fine language and bring forth these choice though perhaps rather unintelligible phrases—phrases with the first gloss of the newest fashion of high-art criticism still resplendent on them.

Davenport did not want that dealer to have those pictures, but he did want to stand so high in the world that that dealer, and all other dealers, should think it no waste of time to pay him court. Mr. Killigrew continued: 'I assure you, my dear sir, that I am delighted with my purchases. Could I come and have a look at anything else you may happen to have in hand? Where is your studio?' and straightway he pulled out a notebook, and suavely hung on Davenport's words.

Nancy heard all that passed; she fingered her necklace, and felt that dear Frank had done well to buy it. Dear Frank always did right. After this he might go and buy fenders, and fire-irons, and coal boxes of solid gold, if he liked; never

again would she oppose him! Nay, more; she even felt capable of entering Zaccary's inner and innermost shop, and of making art-purchases herself. Barrington was standing by her. He shared in her joy as heartily as he could. He himself was miserable, for now he knew that Katherine had refused to come. Davenport's elation did not last long; a dreadful thought came to him; and, seeing that Mr. Killigrew was occupied in showing something to Nancy, he took the opportunity of whispering to Barrington his fear that there must be something terribly wrong about his pictures, or people would not buy them.

'What do you think?' he asked nervously.

'Whenever anyone applauded Phocion's speeches, he always asked what bad thing he had let slip, and he was an idiot for doing so; and you are an idiot too, for in the long-run the public is always right, and no true——'

Here Barrington was interrupted by the sight of Messrs. Hackblock and Carey rolling cumbrously towards them. They were both stout men, and awkward because they only half liked the errand on which they were bent. Mr. Killigrew was the one whom they wanted. Mr. Hackblock came behind him and touched his arm significantly. Mr. Hackblock was a man dearly loved by dealers. He had so many houses, and each house was possessed of such ample wall-space, and Mr. Hackblock himself was possessed of such a raging and unextinguishable appetite for extremely bad and high-priced pictures, that Mr. Killigrew would have bounded eagerly after him to the uttermost parts

of the earth. He did bound after him now. They retired a few steps out of the Davenports' hearing. Mr. Carey would have followed them, but Barrington seized on the opportunity of saying a few words to him.

'Miss Carey is not with you,' said he, though he still hoped to hear that she was.

'No, she is not with me. I particularly wanted her to come, but she seemed so unwilling, that I did not like to press her. It is rather crowded to-day, I don't deny it; but, after all, not much worse than it will be for many a long day to come. I wish I could have persuaded her.'

'So do I,' replied Barrington heartily.

'Yes, but she knows her own mind best. When she tells you she doesn't want to do a thing, it's no good for you to begin to tell her that she does. She is not one of the undecided ones. I have made it a rule never to interfere with her. But I must go to my friend Mr. Hackblock; I know he wants me. Good-morning, Mr. Barrington. Look in on us when you're able.'

'Frank,' whispered Nancy, 'have you made that dealer promise to burn a sacrificial taper beneath your pictures?'

'No,' growled Frank; 'you see there is no reason to suppose that he bought them for himself.'

Davenport's fine feelings were ruffled by the idea that any works of his had been bought merely as articles of commerce. He admitted that it was perhaps a good thing for him that they had been

thus bought, but somehow or other he felt incompetent to deal with the facts of the world as they presented themselves to him.

'I dare say,' said he at length, 'that he has only bought them because he knew of some one who was anxious to have them. I can't for the life of me conceive why everyone doesn't buy pictures for himself.'

They went into the other rooms. Messrs. Hackblock and Carey remained in urgent conversation with Mr. Killigrew. All did not seem to be going well. Mr. Hackblock's face grew greyer and more dismal each moment. His heart was absolutely set on having these two portraits of the charming girl who was engaged to his son; and each word spoken by Mr. Killigrew went far towards convincing him that neither the one nor the other picture would ever hang on his walls.

'Sold already! That's almost incredible! You say yourself that you only bought them a short time ago!'

'I bought them at twelve o'clock. Yes, it was at twelve, as near as I can recollect; and I sold them both about twenty minutes afterwards.'

'And you had no idea that these other gentlemen wanted them?' asked Mr. Carey, who was rather innocent as regarded transactions of this kind.

Mr. Killigrew shrugged his shoulders, and said :

'They are attractive pictures, sir. People like something of that kind, hanging opposite to them at their breakfast or dinner. I don't know how

it is, but people seem to me to buy pictures just for the pleasure they give them, without any regard to whether they are getting a good thing or not. I confess I bought those pictures entirely for myself. I am a sincere lover of art; and it's a constant grief to me that I never can keep a picture I like. I'd rather by far not have sold those two gems.'

Hereupon the dealer heaved a heavy sigh.

'You say that people like pictures of that kind hanging opposite to them at breakfast and dinner!' exclaimed Mr. Carey, on whom these words had produced a highly irritating effect; 'but I tell you that they are likenesses of my only daughter, and very good likenesses, and I wished to purchase them myself. It's not at all pleasant to me to think that any portrait of her is to hang opposite to anyone, either at his breakfast or his dinner—they ought not to hang opposite to anyone but me, or my friend here.'

'Be calm, my dear Carey; I am sure Mr. Killigrew is quite ready to listen to reason. At the same time, Killigrew,' continued Mr. Hackblock, suddenly becoming angry himself, 'I can't conceive how you could do such a thing as sell those pictures without giving me the first offer; you must have known that I was sure to want them!'

Mr. Killigrew shrugged his shoulders; and forgetting the *rôle* of the enthusiastic patron of art for art's sake, which he had so lately assumed, he exclaimed:

'How could I refuse a good offer for such an uncertainty? They might both have been thrown

on my hands! My dear sir, I will do my very best to replace your loss. Give me a commission, and I will get Davenport to paint two pictures quite as good as these.'

'No, no!' cried Mr. Hackblock; 'I'll have these! I must have them. You, Mr. Killigrew, will be so kind as to go to the gentlemen who have anticipated me, and represent the matter to them. Say that the young lady's father, and her future father-in-law, have somehow or other let the matter escape their attention until too late—that they are extremely disappointed, and beg these gentlemen to relinquish their respective purchases.'

'Gentlemen! Respective purchases! They are both the property of the same gentleman!'

'But who is he?' cried Mr. Carey.

'A client of mine', replied Killigrew consequentially; 'a very good client. I almost believe he would have bought that other picture of Miss Carey, only it was not to be had.'

'But,' interposed Mr. Hackblock, in a voice of extreme respect, 'this client of yours must have a great deal of money!'

'That he has! Money without end! Money and land, too; and a pedigree as long as my arm! He is quite a young fellow—under thirty. He was at Cambridge, I think when his father or his uncle died, and he came into the property. It's only five or six years ago; but I can see that he is going to be a first-rate buyer—first-rate; and he knows what's good, too!' and the dealer rubbed his hands with gleeful enthusiasm.

‘We are wasting precious time!’ said Mr. Hackblock. ‘Mr. Killigrew, will you kindly go to Mr. ——— What is his name, by-the-bye—not a secret, I suppose?’

‘His name is Carew. Stop, I have his card somewhere!’ and presently Mr. Killigrew produced a card, on which was to be read the name of ‘Mr. Coventry Wilbraham Carew;’ and ‘Ellerbeck Hall, Northumberland,’ in one corner, and ‘Reform Club’ in the other.

‘Oh!’ growled Mr. Hackblock. ‘Well, Mr. Killigrew, I won’t detain you longer. Will you kindly go to this Mr. Carew, and state the case? Say that I shall be very sorry to deprive him of the pictures; but that I am quite sure that, under the circumstances, he will not wish to withhold them from me.’

Mr. Killigrew departed; and Mr. Carey, not averse to pointing a moral, remarked:

‘You won’t get them for two hundred guineas now.’

‘The dealer’s commission, you mean? It’s of no consequence! I am glad to have them whatever they cost me.’

‘You think you are sure to get them?’

‘Quite! Killigrew is a good little fellow. He will do anything to oblige me.’

But when the said Killigrew returned, the answer that he brought was, that Mr. Carew was extremely sorry to be so disobliging, but that he could not bring himself to part with either.

‘I have done all I possibly could,’ said

Killigrew; 'I assure you I was most anxious to persuade him, but it's a fact that I couldn't.'

The elderly gentlemen looked blank; then they ventured to suggest that the dealer should try again.

The dealer shook his head, and said he felt unable to re-open the question.

'Besides, it's of no use,' he added. 'Mr. Carew seems as firm as a rock about it—quite civil, but quite firm. I am bound to say that he seems to me to be a very strong-willed sort of gentleman.'

'Young?' inquired Mr. Hackblock.

'Yes, quite young, and very good-looking.'

'Confound him!'

'Well, yes, confound him! but if you will excuse my making such a suggestion, gentlemen, he seems to me to have taken quite a violent fancy for the young lady whose portrait he has bought. I am certain he has.'

'How ridiculous!' said Mr. Carey.

'Impossible!' growled Mr. Hackblock.

Meanwhile, in another part of the building, Davenport and Nancy were just being introduced to a tall, well-built, but slight young man, with rather light but immensely thick brown hair, grey eyes, and pale but very handsome face. His manner was an odd mixture of shyness and fearlessness; and his name was Carew. He expressed his hearty admiration of Davenport's work—he invited Davenport and his wife to come down to the North and pay him a long visit, and see some other pictures which he had, and then he said,

almost timidly: 'I suppose you think that I have behaved very shabbily in not letting Mr. Hackblock have these two of yours?'

'Mr. Hackblock?' said Davenport in much surprise, for he had not heard the story.

Mr. Carew related it, and Davenport at once exclaimed: 'You have done perfectly right! I should have hated to think that I had been working so hard to give pleasure to that man! I am so glad you sent him about his business!'

'Is Miss Carey as charming in reality as you have made her?'

'She's a thousand times more so!'

'And you know her?'

'Yes, very well.'

'She sometimes comes to your house?' and having said that, Mr. Carew looked as if he wanted to say a very great deal more.

'You would like to see her to compare her with your pictures?' said Nancy sympathetically.

'I don't know about comparing her with the pictures,' said he more boldly; 'I'd very much like to see her.'

'I am afraid all the Careys will be cross with you—it might be difficult to get her to meet you,' said Nancy, who had been considering ways and means.

'I am afraid so!' said he sadly, as if overborne by his sin. 'I am sorry, but I couldn't possibly have done otherwise.'

'Of course not!' said Davenport; 'and you ought to see Miss Carey. My wife and I will make a point of asking her to our house some

day soon, and you shall meet her. She need not be told that you are to be there.'

'Frank! Frank!' murmured Nancy, when Mr. Carew was gone, 'you have done a foolish thing! You talked of making the buyer of your pictures burn perpetual tapers before them in token of worship of Katherine and her beauty; here is a man who needs no making—he has lighted the tapers of his own accord already, and you ought not to encourage him in such nonsense—you ought to blow them out!'

CHAPTER XVII.

'I said, I will be wise, but it was far from me.'

ECCLESIASTES.

THE longer Katherine stayed away from the park, the more difficult it became to go. She had begun to think that it was very foolish to stay away, that she was most certainly exaggerating the importance of what had taken place when last she had seen Mr. Barrington, but still she felt ashamed to see him again.

'Why, Katherine, you never seem to go into the park now,' said Mrs. Carey, in some concern. 'It must be more than a fortnight since you had a walk!'

'Oh no, I have taken to going out in the carriage instead. You see it goes to take Nancy Davenport a drive, so I may as well drive too, and have the pleasure of her company.'

‘Driving is not walking. I wish you would walk.’

‘We do walk. I have not been out for the last two days because I have a sore throat, but we drove to Richmond Park the other day, and walked for more than an hour. Didn’t we, Cosette, my beauty? It’s far nicer there than here; isn’t it!’

‘I daresay it is,’ said Mrs. Carey, and so the matter dropped.

‘Mr. Lewis Barrington is in the drawing-room, ma’am,’ said the maid, suddenly appearing.

‘Ask him to come here, Clarke; or perhaps, Kitty, it would be more civil if you were to go and bring him.’

Katherine had upset her work-box, and was half-way under the sofa in search of its contents. With difficulty she found words to say: ‘Let Clarke go. I want to pick up these things.’ Clarke went. Katherine did pick up her things, and recovered her usual colour before he came. His first glance was at her. She was standing by the window, nerving herself to meet him. By the time that he had said a few words to Mrs. Carey, Katherine was able to greet him with composure. Nothing whatever was to be gathered from her manner except that she did not wish to quarrel with him. He had brought Mrs. Carey some very pretty wild-flowers.

‘You have every hot-house flower that blows,’ said he, glancing round the room and seeing flowers in every place where flowers could add a grace,

‘but I went into the country to gather you a fresh bouquet of these wild creatures.’

‘Oh, what a number of miles you must have had to go to find them! You have used hours of your precious time!’

‘Oh no, I only used a fragment of time which I generally devote to pleasure.’

‘You gave up your pleasure to do this for me!’

‘This was a pleasure, and a great one; besides, I did not give up my pleasure—it was taken from me.’

Katherine knew what he meant. She felt that he was probably looking at her. She dared not return his gaze, and did her best to go on quietly with her work.

‘No flowers are half so delightful as wild ones,’ continued Mrs. Carey; ‘you can’t imagine what a treat it is to me to have these!’

Barrington smiled happily. It was his first happy smile since he had entered the room. She had made him feel that he had done something approaching to a good action. He again glanced in Katherine’s direction. He wished she would look up, but she was not yet sufficiently mistress of herself to do so, and though she had a bad sore throat, she still continued to sit by the window, far away from him, with her eyes glued to her work as if she had not enough light. Why would she not meet his eye? Was there no way of making her do so?

‘Are you very busy writing, Mr. Barrington?’ asked Mrs. Carey. ‘We never see you, do we, Katherine?’

Katherine did not know what to say, and

ended by making no answer. Barrington was equally silent. Mr. Carey's words made him feel that he was playing the sorry part of a traitor. She continued, 'I suppose you are always busy with articles and things of that kind, but are you writing any books?'

'No; I am only writing a play.'

Katherine started. Was he going to reveal her carefully-kept secret? It had been kept so devoutly; was he now about to punish her by revealing it?

'Oh, a play! A new play!' exclaimed Mrs. Carey. 'Do tell me about it. I am so interested in everything connected with the stage!'

'Then that is where Miss Katherine derives her wish to be an actress,' thought Barrington. 'It's from her mother.'—'I'll tell you,' said he, for besides being most anxious to hear Katherine's opinion of a certain scene, he was also desirous to stimulate her to a display of feeling of some kind. 'It occurred to me some time ago that Meinhold's "Amber Witch" would make an excellent play. The interest is rather remote, perhaps, but the story is so dramatic, and the situations are so good.'

'He has told my secret!' thought Katherine angrily. 'He has actually told my mother all about my play!' Her face flushed with surprise and anger, and she looked at Barrington with eyes sparkling with the same feelings. He was sitting exactly in front of Mrs. Carey's sofa. Katherine was behind it, and could throw what expression she liked into her face, but he was so placed that every

look in his could be seen by Mrs. Carey. He met Katherine's eyes; his did their best to say, 'Trust me,' but they were compelled to say it in so quiet and unassuming a way that he was afraid that they would not persuade Katherine to show much patience.

'I was asked to do this by a friend,' he continued, still looking as appealingly as he dared at Katherine, 'a friend for whom it was a delightful privilege to work; and from time to time I had the benefit of her opinion about bringing this or that portion of the story more prominently forward. This was of great importance to me, because she was to play the part of the heroine, and it had, of course, to be adapted as much as possible to her taste.'

'Of course you would have to see her,' said Mrs. Carey. 'That understands itself.'

'Yes, but unfortunately I have been deprived of the chance of referring to her for help whenever I was in doubt myself, and now I am quite at a standstill.' As he said this he looked to see how Katherine took the announcement. She assumed an air of absolute unconcern, and evidently did her utmost to convey to him whether he made progress or not was a matter of extraordinary indifference to her.

Mrs. Carey, on the contrary, looked sympathetic, and said, with much pity, 'But in that case you can't tell whether you are writing what will please her or not.'

He shook his head and said, 'Precisely! It is most difficult for me! I can't get on at all. You

see, I could easily finish it to please myself, but suppose it didn't please her. There is one point especially about which I am in doubt—I really don't know what to do. Perhaps you, Mrs. Carey, will give me two or three hints; or if you don't feel equal to that, perhaps Miss Carey would?'

Unperceived by her mother, Katherine shook her head, though without taking the trouble to look up to see if Barrington saw her ungracious refusal. She intended it to be ungracious. She was angry with him for telling so much—for telling anything. To her mind, the whole bloom of the thing was gone as soon as it ceased to be a well-kept secret and tender link of union between him and her. Let her dear mother give every assistance which in her lay, she herself would never again bestow one thought on the creation of a work which was either hers altogether, and hers alone, or else a thing in which she took no interest whatsoever. How could he be so utterly heartless as to betray their treasured secret—the secret which had brought them together—to a third person, even if that third person was her own dear mother? Katherine screwed her lips together, and sat looking more fixedly at her needle than ever. It was the first time that she had been angry with Barrington, but now she was more than angry with him—she was bitterly offended.

Mrs. Carey was saying, 'I am sure, dear Mr. Barrington, if my poor opinion would be of any value to you, you are most welcome to have it; but if you are writing this part for a particular

person to play, and she has strong likings and dislikings, I should be so afraid of misleading you; it would be such a pity if I did that. Don't think that I am not anxious to help you. I am sure both my daughter and I would be only too glad to do that, but no one can do you any real good but the lady herself. Don't you think so, too, Katherine?'

'I suppose not,' said Katherine, coldly.

'And you can't see her, you say?' continued Mrs. Carey. 'Couldn't you write to her?'

Before answering Mrs. Carey, Barrington looked inquiringly at Katherine. At last something definite had been said. Could he write to her? Katherine shook her head. She was inflexibly determined to have nothing more to do with this.

'I am afraid I can't,' he replied.

'Then let us do our best to help you. Ask my daughter, Mr. Barrington; ask her about anything which you are in doubt of. I will throw in a word now and then if anything occurs to me; but I am too old to put myself in the place of young people; my daughter will give you twice as much help as I can. She is still young and sympathizing.'

The word sympathizing did not seem to describe Katherine very appropriately at present. Barrington found her eminently unsympathizing, and Mrs. Carey would probably have done so too had she been able to see her. Barrington felt obliged to drive her to say something—if she would but speak, he would know better what to do—at

present he was in despair of being able to conciliate her. He therefore said:

‘Thank you; then, with Mrs. Carey’s permission, I will briefly state the point which is a difficulty to me. I am in the beginning of the fifth act, Miss Carey, and I want to know if you think that a young lady would like the part better if I arranged to make the heroine do what perhaps is——’

Hereupon Katherine rose, and said rather nervously:

‘Excuse my interrupting you, Mr. Barrington. I will do my very best to be of service to you; but I am afraid I can’t do much, for one reason, because I am very stupid, and for another, because I can’t imagine myself acting that play.’

‘Can’t you?’ said he; ‘can’t you, really? I wish you would tell me why not?’ for this was such a sudden change, and it overwhelmed him.

‘Only for silly reasons. Still silly reasons, if you act on them, are just as important as wise ones. I fancy if ever I wish to take a part in any play, it will be in one which has been written for me myself, and kept secret from everyone but me until it is seen on the stage. I could not act in one that had been discussed with all kinds of people—I should hate it.’

‘But the actors must know about it, Kitty,’ said Mrs. Carey soothingly.

‘And the author can be scarcely kept in the dark,’ said Barrington; and bitterly angry Katherine felt with him for being able to jest.

‘Come, Kitty, be sensible, dear, and help Mr. Barrington. He only wants a hint or two on some trifling point, I am sure.’

‘That is all,’ said he; ‘and I am very sorry that I am compelled to be so troublesome.’

‘You are not troublesome at all!’ said Mrs. Carey warmly; she saw that he looked distressed, and that his face had clouded over, and wondered why Katherine was so disobliging.

Miss Carey made no such protest.

‘Yes, I am,’ he replied bitterly, for he noticed this omission; ‘but, unfortunately, I undertook to write this, and I am so afraid of not getting it finished before I go abroad.’

‘Abroad!’ Katherine felt chilled in a moment. ‘Abroad!’ but probably he only meant France or Italy. Let him go to France or Italy; it would be better. It would give both of them time to forget much that was better forgotten. When he came home again, she would be able to meet him as a friend.

‘You are going abroad?’ inquired Mrs. Carey.

‘Yes; my friends the Dalrymples—they are your friends, too—want me to go to them; they have found an eligible post for me.’

Katherine dropped her needlework in alarm; for the Dalrymples were at Melbourne. Mr. Dalrymple had received an official appointment there, and was not likely to return for ten or twelve years.

‘But surely, if you go out there, it will be a great injury to your literary work?’ said Mrs. Carey.

‘In some respects it will; but I think that, on the whole, I shall probably be able to do more there than here. Mr. Dalrymple offers me a very good appointment. I really think it will be a good thing for me to go.’

Katherine observed that he said will be, and not would be; then it was settled that he was to go. She picked up her work again, and applied herself to it: she was only too glad to have any pretext for looking down.

‘Then you really are going?’ said Mrs. Carey reproachfully: even she felt that she should miss Barrington when he left this hemisphere.

‘Yes, I shall go. The Dalrymples want me; they urge me to go. After all, what is there to prevent me—I have no ties here?’

Was he uttering a bitter lamentation, or was he heartlessly telling her that he was nothing to him? His words were susceptible of either interpretation. Katherine dared not try to understand them better by means of a close study of his face. Her heart began to feel as cold and as heavy as lead. Was she driving him away, or did he want to go? In any case he was going; for, when Mrs. Carey again said, ‘You really think you will leave this country?’ his answer was ‘Yes; I am resolved to go.’

At that moment, he was indeed resolved to go. As he had just said, ‘What was there to keep him?’ Katherine was in the same room with him; but in what way was he the happier for her presence? She was cold as a stone. What was

her beauty to him, when it was all given over to looking rigid and pitiless? He would rather by far be thousands of miles away, and know that their meeting was an impossibility, than live as he did now within a stone's throw, fretting his very soul away by incessant calculations as to the chances of her relenting. Morning after morning he had gone out tormented by doubt of seeing her; day after day he had returned heartsick and faint with disappointment. He had rather by far be banished altogether from England, and all that England could give him, than stay there to be continually brought face to face with a banishment which was yet more terrible to him. He well knew why the Dalrymples had found this excellent appointment for him. After meeting Katherine in the Davenports' house in October last, he had gone to Mrs. Dalrymple, and had told her that he had come to inform her that he could no longer be bound to avoid Miss Carey so strictly—that he was constantly compelled either to be offensively rude to her, or to break his word, and that he must therefore retract his promise. The Dalrymples were then preparing to go to Melbourne. Mr. Dalrymple had just received his appointment, and was obliged to start almost immediately.

Mrs. Dalrymple had listened with regret, but could do nothing more. If Barrington was resolved not to be bound down to forswear Katherine's society, he was free to decline; but she had then said, 'Lewis, if my husband were to find that he wanted another secretary, what do you say to

coming out for a while?' and Barrington had thought it politic to show no special aversion to such a post and such a separation. At that time, he had thought it impossible that, under any circumstances, a day could come when he would wish to go. That day had come; he was going. He sat silent for a few minutes, thinking of these things, and how soon the memory of this room, and of those whom he now saw in it, would be 'portions and parcels of the dreadful past!'

Mrs. Carey was silent also; she was thinking that, probably long before he reached those distant shores of the under-world, she, too, would have entered a new and strange country—one from which, God help us! no one dear to us ever returns.

Katherine could scarcely think at all. She was going to lose him, and felt stunned. The intensity of her regret only made her look colder and more stony. She dared not speak, lest her voice should sound strange and broken. She could not raise her heavy eye-lids—she felt in a miserable dream—that he really was going. Mrs. Carey recovered first, and said:

'One hates the thought of any change, Mr. Barrington, and Melbourne seems so far—so terribly far away from us; but you are young and strong, and I suppose that in your profession it is an immense gain to see these distant colonies. If you stay out there for a few years, you will be quite an authority on Australian affairs ever after. We must look on the bright side.'

Katherine heard the words 'the bright side.'

How could there be one? God forbid that he thought that there was one, or that he was going away with any hope of happiness in his mind! She painfully raised her eyes to his face. It was gloomy enough to please her.

'I'll see you again before I go,' said he to Mrs. Carey, as he rose so take leave.

Katherine's heart stood still. Had it come to that?

'Katherine, dear,' said Mrs. Carey, 'will you guide Mr. Barrington through the labyrinth which divides me from the rest of the world? Ring the bell as you pass, my child, and then Dilston will meet you on the stairs.'

Barrington wished she would not ring the bell. He did not want Dilston to meet them on the stairs. He wanted to have time to win his pardon. Katherine rose drearily and coldly. She rang the bell for Dilston, and opened the door which led into the long gallery which connected Mrs. Carey's room with the house. They entered it together, walking side by side. She seemed so very unforgiving that at last he began to feel almost angry with her, but suddenly he became aware that her eyes were full of tears.

'You know why I am going?' said he. 'It's because I feel you would like it.'

'I like it?' said she, half turning her pale face to him, but only half turning it.

'Yes, I have offended you somehow; you are changed to me.'

'I am not sufficiently changed to you to make it necessary for you to go to the other end of the

world,' said Katherine, speaking with some difficulty. 'If you do that, we shall never see each other again.'

'We never do see each other as it is,' said he. 'Why will you not let me have that pleasure?'

She was silent for a moment; then she said impetuously:

'Why did you do what you must have known I could never forgive? The play was to be a secret between us. Why did you begin talking about it?'

'I have told nothing but the fact that I am writing it; it was your fault. I was compelled to learn your wishes on that one point, and couldn't see you. You were angry with me before I told that; you have avoided me for nearly a fortnight.'

She looked full of distress and painfully nervous, but made no attempt to answer this. They had now reached the door which opened on the stairs. Behind that door Barrington felt that Dilston was waiting for them. There was but one moment to win her over.

'You won't even look at me!' said he. 'You have not once let me see your eyes!'

She tried to look up, but could not do it. Suddenly she took hold of the handle of the door, and exclaimed:

'It is no use talking of all this! You are going away, and that puts an end to the play and to everything!'

He put his hand on hers and held it for a

moment, as if to prevent her opening the door. She made no resistance, but stood faltering by his side.

‘You do not imagine that I am going away because I wish to go? It’s because I can’t bear to live so near and never see you! I’d rather by far be thousands of miles away, and know that the thing is an impossibility!’

‘Then you *are* going?’ said she, almost carelessly.

She was curiously provoking, and did not give him one fragment of help towards speaking his mind by showing hers.

‘Yes, I am going,’ he replied firmly; ‘that is, unless you will let me see you sometimes.’

His hand was still restraining hers; he felt hers fluttering about uneasily beneath his, as if to escape, but he held it tight, and said:

‘Answer—am I to go, or not?’

‘You are not,’ she replied.

‘You will let me see you?’

‘I will see you sometimes, as I used to do,’ said she at last. ‘Will that do?’

‘That will do,’ said he, and released her hand. ‘If you promise that, I stay; but having once tasted the delight of seeing you, I can’t live without it.’

‘We shall both of us have to live without it soon,’ said Katherine, for she knew that Roger Hackblock was coming home.

Some one was trying to turn the handle of the door on the other side. She was again holding it, and felt it move.

'We must go,' said she. 'Dilston is waiting outside. You know I rang for him.'

'Say you will come to-morrow, will you?'

'Yes,' said she, 'I will.'

He felt that it was madness, but as she said this he stooped down and kissed the hand with which she was just beginning to open the door. He did it so quickly and unexpectedly, and the consciousness that Dilston was on the other side of the barrier was so strong, that she could show no feeling of anger, surprise, or anything. She simply continued the action of opening the door, and almost instantly after the kiss had been given, the stalwart form of the footman was revealed. Katherine's face was so pale that a deep blush only restored its natural colour. Barrington did not like to leave her until her eyes met his.

'Good-bye till to-morrow, Miss Carey,' said he.

On this she looked up, and all his unhappiness was over.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Palamon. You love her, then?

Arcite. Who would not?

Pal. I saw her first.

Arc. That's nothing.

Pal. But it shall be.

Arc. I saw her too.

Pal. Yes, but you must not love.'

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

MRS. CAREY, like many other invalids, required an unusually large amount of fresh air, and

in fact, never felt comfortable unless in a thorough draught. Frequently Katherine suffered for it, and on this occasion, having a sore throat already, she made it so much worse that when night came she was seriously ill, and besides being a victim to almost every evil which can befall a throat, was threatened with inflammation of the lungs into the bargain. She passed a dismal night, and next day, at the very time she had promised to meet Lewis Barrington, her aching head was lying wearily on her pillow, and that hand which had so recently thrilled beneath his kiss was now in the grasp of a medical gentleman, whose accents were bland, but whose mandates were stern. It is needless to say that he would not hear of her leaving her bed. The sun was shining, the birds flitting about, green trees were spreading wide branches to shelter her, but in bed Katherine had to lie. So said the family doctor; and when he saw her hand steal to her eyes to wipe away a tear of disappointment, he did but impress on her still more forcibly the necessity for obedience. Strongly as he had spoken, the old nurse followed him out of the room, to whisper: 'Sir, if you really mean that it is not safe for her to get up, you must be so good as to say more than that to her, for Miss Katherine is that wilful, there's no knowing what she'll do. I have known her bounce out of bed almost before your back was well turned, and go straight out of doors for a long walk, though you perhaps had just been telling her that it was as much as her life was worth to do such a thing!'

On this the doctor returned to her room, and said: 'Your illness, Miss Carey, will be comparatively trifling if you will allow me to manage you as I wish; if you are self-willed, you may be dangerously ill, and laid up for months.'

'If I obey, how long shall I have to stay in bed?'

'Ten days, or a fortnight at the most.'

'Then I will obey; in fact, I must. How could I get up when I am in such dreadful pain?'

The doctor bowed and left. She lay thinking of what she had missed. Suddenly she remembered that Barrington might perhaps think that she was keeping away from caprice or unkindness, be bitterly offended, and at once decide to go thousands of miles away from her. At this thought her eyes filled with scalding tears.

'I want a pencil, nurse,' said she; 'don't begin to say that it is bad for me to sit up and write, for I insist on having what I want. Be quick; I only want to write a word or two. I can't be kept doing nothing.'

'Surely you have plenty to do, Miss Katherine, with bearing all that pain! Isn't that hard enough work for you to do, and——'

'Give me a pencil and some paper,' interrupted Katherine impatiently. And she thus wrote to Barrington: 'I am ill in bed with a really bad sore throat, and can't go out. Perhaps it won't be well for a fortnight. That's why I do not keep my promise. Do not be angry with me. Write me a nice letter, and say that you are not.' She put this in an envelope, and wrote the address in pencil.

'Pencil!' muttered the nurse contemptuously. 'The post won't have anything to say to a letter not written in ink!'

'It's not a letter; it's only a poor stupid note. Tell Dilston or some of them to take it at once. He will only have to walk across the street with it.'

That done, she was happy. Very soon came an answer 'Angry with you? Never! I am only too grateful to you for thinking of me in your pain, and writing that note. Without it I should have been wretched! I shall be anxious until I know that you are well. My thoughts are all yours. Send me a few words to-morrow if you are able; but not for worlds would I have you run any risk.'

Katherine wrote a few words every day, and sometimes a few pages, leaving the nurse to draw what inferences she liked. Barrington sent his answer by post. They daily grew tenderer and longer. Katherine read them a hundred times, and lay on her bed of pain feeling herself the happiest girl alive.

The doctor came every day for more than a week, and sometimes twice, admitted the improvement which took place in her, but steadily forbade her to quit her bed for another week. Katherine was quite aware that she had been seriously ill, and that caution was still necessary; but after being in bed seven or eight days, did not see why she was to stay seven more, when all violent pain had left her, and she had such a great desire

to go out. She did not believe it would hurt her to go out; besides, even if it were rather dangerous, she was willing to take the risk for the sake of what it brought her. So that very afternoon she wrote to Barrington: 'Expect to see me at our usual place to-morrow at eleven, or as soon after as I can get ready; for I must not begin to dress until the doctor's visit is over, as he forbids me to leave my room. Don't write back to say that I had better not come, for I am well now; besides, you yourself will see me, and can judge how I am bearing the open air, and I promise to go home if you tell me I ought. I will obey *you*.'

By a quarter to eleven, she had seen her doctor—had again received the strictest orders not to venture even to sit up for an hour or two in her own room—had swiftly dressed herself, and gone downstairs; by twenty minutes past, she had opened the green garden-door, and by twenty-two, she had met Barrington, who could hardly restrain his joy at seeing her.

'How delightful it is to be out!' said she. 'That doctor wanted to keep me in the house for another week! I have made nurse promise not to let mother know I have left my room. I will go to her myself when I return, and then she will see how wise I was to come out.'

'Are you sure you are not doing what is very imprudent?' said he, for he was afraid she was not to be trusted.

'You know you can send me in if you see me looking tired. I said I would go. But it is warm—it can't hurt me.'

'Ah! I am to pass a self-denying ordinance! You look well and beautiful. It is such happiness to see you again!'

Katherine hung her head. She felt very timid. She liked to be quietly happy with him—not to be startled by unwonted compliments or avowals. She was not strong yet, and enjoyed the sense of being in the company of one dear to her, but wanted nothing more.

He saw that she had not yet shaken off her illness, and resolved to do and say nothing likely to distress her. She should rest quietly on the consciousness of his protecting affection. There was quite enough to make him happy without anything more. They walked up and down the well-known paths for nearly an hour, almost in silence. Neither of them had the least idea how few were the words that they exchanged during the time. To them each moment was an eventful one, crowded with delights, full of fresh reasons for being happy. Once Katherine lifted her sweet thoughtful eyes to his, and said:

'You did not really mean what you said last time I saw you? You never seriously thought of going to the Dalrymples?'

'I meant it when I said it, but if you say that you would like me to stay here, I stay.'

She smiled quietly, and said simply, 'Is there the least need for me to assure you of that?'

That speech, of course, brought on a long fit of silence—most speeches did. He and she did not look like lovers as they paced backwards and forwards in this preoccupied way. At least none

but practised observers would have recognized them as such. Their manner was so earnest; they looked so much on the ground at their feet, and so little at each other. When their eyes did meet it was in such a troubled way as if each knew that he was treading a narrow and dangerous path, and that though all was as happy now as happy love could make it, one pressure of the hand, one look in each other's eyes the least bit longer than usual, would change everything into danger and difficulty. They seemed even afraid to speak to each other, and profoundly conscious that some force which might overmaster them if let loose was pressing nearer to them, and only kept back by a barrier so thin that a look or a touch would rend it asunder. Never before this day had so many things been said which seemed to bring the dangerous moment near.

'Where are you going in the summer?' asked Barrington; for it was July, and he was beginning to be afraid of losing sight of her.

'I don't know yet. To some place near London, where mother can be moved easily—not to Hazeldene. She doesn't like it; besides, the Hackblocks are not to be there this year.'

How this hateful name of Hackblock did protrude itself into their conversation at every turn. Surely the time must be drawing near for getting rid of it for ever. He humbly hoped that he had won Katherine's heart; if she had not been there to deter him, he would at once have put his fortune to the test, for the last ten days had brought them infinitely nearer to each other.

'Some place near, you say. I wonder where I shall go?'

'To us for a while,' replied Katherine, kindly. 'This time when we ask you, you will come, won't you?'

Before he could answer, he saw something—something eminently unwelcome. Roger Hackblock was advancing to meet them, looking doggedly determined to assert his ownership of Katherine without delay, and possibly not to do it quite pleasantly. He was coming quickly from Princess Margaret Street; they were walking very slowly towards it. Barrington did not lose an instant in preparing Katherine to meet him. She started when she saw who was coming, and exclaimed, 'Let us turn back! How cross he looks! He has no right to follow me in this way!'

'No, we must meet him. Miss Carey, do not show any irritation. Let this meeting of ours be considered a mere matter of accident. No one has any right to prevent us seeing each other; do not let anyone do it.'

'Certainly not; I won't allow it.'

'Be firm, then, and that will give us more time to think,' said he hurriedly, for Roger was near, and very soon it would be too late.

'Thank you,' said she, for she felt Barrington was wise—her own impulse would have been to show her anger.

'Remember, I can't live without you!' said he, at the very last instant when such words could be safe.

There was a bright pink flush in Katherine's face, and her eyes were unfaltering as she looked

at Roger Hackblock. She defied danger, and did not shrink from the unpleasant encounter. The feeling which was uppermost in her mind was that he had done something extremely shabby in breaking in on their meeting, and ought to be made to feel it. He took off his hat, and then held out his hand to Katherine stiffly, glared at Barrington, and finally said, in a voice full of suppressed discomposure:

‘I have just come from Hamburg. The steamer only got in at ten o’clock. I came a few days before my time on account of your illness, and went at once to your house. I did not expect to find you out of doors! Who could have expected such a thing? It is most imprudent! Fancy being in bed a whole week with bronchitis and inflammation of the lungs, and then coming out against the doctor’s positive orders, and in the rain, too!’

‘In the rain!’ echoed Katherine.

The words seemed foolish to Barrington also, but a second’s observation convinced both that a fine rain, which possessed considerable wetting power, really was falling fast. The ground was shining with moisture—they had been too much absorbed by other things to notice it.

‘Yes, in the rain! Katherine, you ought not to have done this. Suppose you take cold——’

‘I am not at all likely to do so. You talk of inflammation of the lungs, but I’ve not had that, and——’

‘Come,’ said he, offering his arm, ‘let me take you home at once.’ And he turned to Barrington with an air admirably adapted to convey to him

that the proper thing for him to do was to take his departure at once.

Katherine saw it, but did not wish to lose the protection of his presence. 'I'll come,' said she, 'but we are all walking the same way. You know Mr. Barrington, Roger; you were introduced to him at our party.'

The two men bowed—bowed scantily and defiantly; then Barrington held out his hand to Katherine, and said, 'I must leave you now. When I see you again, I hope to hear that your walk has done you no harm.' There was a world of support in the firm grasp of his hand.

As soon as Barrington was gone, Roger Hackblock, who had scarcely been able to control his impatience, said, 'Now, Katherine, I suppose you will tell me what this means? I came home full of pleasure at the thought of seeing you again, and when I do see you, it is with this man. How do you happen to be walking with him?'

'Because he happened to meet me,' she replied curtly.

'Does he often happen to meet you, then?'

'No, not often; sometimes.'

'And when you do meet him, may I ask if you always walk with him?'

'Yes. I'll tell you, Roger—I'll tell you all I do, when we get in. Don't say any more about it now. You look so angry, and speak so loud, that you make everyone stare at us! Please wait until we get into the house. I have no desire to hide anything from you.'

He did wait, but he waited very sulkily,

walking by her side in total silence, and with eyes bent sternly on some imaginary object in front of him.

Katherine would have gone in by the garden-door as usual, but he took the lead, and went as a matter of course to the front entrance, not being a personage made to use by-paths. He rang the bell noisily and angrily, and stood grinding his heels on the steps till the door was opened, strode in before Katherine, and at once made for the dining-room, that being the nearest room, and therefore the fittest for his purpose.

‘Here,’ said he; ‘let us go in here, Katherine; I must speak to you at once.’

The servant saw that something was terribly amiss, and prudently disappeared.

‘Wait one minute, Roger,’ said poor Katherine. Her heart was so full that she feared she would not be able to control herself unless he gave her a minute or two to recover. ‘I’ll come to you directly; go in and wait.’

He did so. He paced the room, impatiently consulting his watch every few minutes. A quarter of an hour—half an hour passed, and still she did not come, and each moment his anger against her gained strength.

She was in her own room; she was weak with illness, overwrought with the excitement of the morning; but still she knew that the time had come to tell Roger Hackblock that she did not love him. It was such a terrible thing to say. She lingered, trying to nerve herself for the effort, but she had no idea how long she was keeping

him waiting. She thought she had been five minutes when she had been more than half an hour. She was just going down, when a note was brought to her. It was as follows:

‘KATHERINE,

‘I have waited for you exactly five-and-thirty minutes; longer than that I do not choose to wait. If you did not intend to see me, why not say so at once? I came home full of pleasure, because I was going to see you. What a miserable meeting it has been! I know you are ill, but no illness can excuse such unkindness; and why did your illness not keep you away from your friend Mr. Barrington?

‘Your aggrieved

‘ROGER.’

‘My aggrieved Roger,’ said Katherine angrily, for her irritation against him was so great that she was disposed to be angry with him for everything he did; even his Christian name was an offence to her, though she must have known that it could not have been his own choice. ‘That’s how he writes to me!’ she exclaimed. ‘Then I’ll write to him! I’ll write at once, and tell him that I do not love him at all, and don’t care how he writes to me, or wish ever to see him again!’

She took pen and paper and sat down, but hardly had she dipped her pen in the ink, than a sudden revulsion of feeling took place in her.

She covered her face with her hands, laid her head on the table, and cried like a child. She had thought to cover her paper with hard and unkind words; had believed that it would be easy to tell him that she rejoiced to be freed from her engagement to him; but instead of that, the smooth white page before her was blistered with tears—tears that could not be repressed, and they came faster and faster. He had done her no wrong. It was she who had been false and unkind—she who was about to write a letter which would cut him to the heart; and not Roger alone, but his father and mother would be hurt by her, and by what she was going to do! He had been as good to her as it was in his nature to be, and they had treated her like a child of their own. The more she thought of these things, the more she wept. She did not know how long a time had passed, when she felt a loving hand laid on her shoulder; she heard a voice say, 'Katherine.' And then her mother's soft, warm cheek was laid against hers—her mother, who had not been upstairs for years, had stolen up to comfort her. Katherine flung her arms round her neck, and sobbed:

'Mother, have you seen Roger?'

'Yes, dear, he came soon after eleven. We sent to tell you, and found that you had gone out. I supposed you were in bed, and was shocked to hear what you had done, but said you were sure to come back directly, and he waited; but when the rain began to fall, he grew so uneasy lest you should make yourself ill again, that I did my best to direct him to where he was likely to find you.'

I suppose he did find you; but what has happened? Why are you crying? Why did he go away so angrily? Clarke saw him, and she said that he looked quite white, and could hardly speak.'

'Mother,' said Katherine, 'I can't marry him!'

Mrs. Carey looked as one may look who beholds the tide rolling in, and knows that some strong sea-wall on which he has hitherto counted for safety is broken down.

'You can't marry Roger Hackblock?' said she, and turned so pale that Katherine came to her support, fearing that she was going to faint. That fear was groundless. Mrs. Carey soon recovered, and Katherine said:

'Mother, I am unhappy; more unhappy than I can tell you; but I really can't marry him.'

Mrs. Carey shook her head drearily, and gasped:

'You must talk to your father, dear child; I am hardly fit for a conversation of this kind; but that's not why I shrink from it. I'd go through anything if I could help you, but I can't. It's of no use to talk to me.'

'Why is it of no use? do tell me why you say that.'

'Because it is true. If you tell me you won't marry Roger, you grieve me, because I think it is for your happiness to marry him; but if you say it is not, all I can say is, on no account think of doing such a thing. That is my feeling, but I am afraid it won't be your father's.'

Before Katherine could speak, Clarke opened the door, and said:

‘Mr. Carey is in your room, ma’am; he wants to see you. He appears much put out about something;’ and, as she said this, the maid fixed two most inquisitive twinkling jetblack eyes on the mother and daughter, who so obviously were in the same plight as her master.

‘Father!’ exclaimed Katherine. ‘Father at home at this time?’

‘He came in a hansom, Miss Katherine, driving a tearing pace; and Dilston told me master said the cabman was to have whatever he asked for, along of his having drove so fast.’

Mrs. Carey and her daughter exchanged glances; they knew that he had come home because he had seen Roger.

‘I’d better go,’ murmured Mrs. Carey. ‘Katherine, come with me.’

Katherine shrank back; but what did it matter whether she confronted her angry father ten minutes sooner or ten minutes later?—the terrible moment must inevitably come. She shivered, but rose up, and was just putting her arm round her mother to help her back to her own room, when Mr. Carey himself appeared; and, in a cheerful voice which would have befitted a father of a family welcoming all his children home to a joyful Christmas gathering, said:

‘You upstairs, dear wife? and Kitty well again! That is a sight for sair e’en!’

‘Why have you come home at this unusual time, Cornelius?’ inquired Mrs. Carey anxiously.

‘I had to hurry back for a business-paper I forgot to take with me this morning. I did not

want it, but I wanted to know it was safe. Here it is!' and he flourished a schedule of imposing appearance; but still did not altogether deceive his wife, who felt sure that he was assuming an appearance of gaiety, lest his real manner should distress her. 'Wouldn't you be better in your own room, dear?' said he. 'I'll carry you there. Come with us, Kitty, and open the doors, there's a darling!' and, so saying, he took his shadowy wife in his arms, and tenderly carried her to her own room.

CHAPTER XIX.

'It is very good for strength
To know that some one needs you to be strong.'
Aurora Leigh.

KATHERINE only accompanied her father as far as the threshold of her mother's room; then she crept back to her own. It was not that she had any hope of escaping an explanation with him—that she knew to be impossible! but she had some vague feeling that she could go through it better in her own room. It was homelike to her; she had been shut up almost alone in it for so many days now, that each article of furniture was a friend and companion to her. She dreaded the unfamiliar aspect of the downstairs rooms, especially when she was about to see another sight still more unfamiliar—her father's face in anger.

It was certain that he would be angry; so far, he had been acting a part in the interest of her mother's health. When he and she were alone together, his true mind would appear. His prompt return after seeing Roger was enough of itself to alarm her. What reason could he have for desiring this marriage beyond a parent's natural anxiety to see his child well established in life? Her mother had said that he had one; what could it be? She asked herself this question repeatedly; but had no means of answering it.

In a very short time, after depositing his wife on her sofa again, Mr. Carey re-entered Katherine's room. The effort to conceal his anxiety had vanished with the occasion which called it forth; he now came in listlessly, with eyes heavy with the expectation of sorrow. He dropped into a chair by Katherine's writing table as one who had not strength left to stand, drearily rubbed his forehead as if to smooth away a sense of confusion left by some scene which had been strangely and unexpectedly painful; then he turned his sad eyes on his daughter, and said:

'I suppose you know why I have come home at this unusual time, Katherine? All this is very hard on a poor old man like me!'

Katherine faltered. Her father, though sixty, always passed for a hale man of forty-nine or fifty. He walked briskly, held his head high, and looked about with eyes sparkling with kindness and ready intelligence. She had never thought of him as an old man; but now, when on hearing these words she looked up, he seemed to be a broken-down,

dispirited man, verging on four-score. She could not bear to look at him; her eyes fell, and she drew one quick breath of pain.

'Let me hear what you have to say directly,' said he.

The words were not especially harsh, but they appeared so to her; for he had never spoken so harshly to her before.

'I think you have come home because you have seen Roger,' said Katherine; and she spoke thus straightforwardly, because she was courageous by nature, but a stronger reason was that she wished to spare her father all unnecessary pain.

'Yes,' said he, 'I have seen Roger, and he was in a very excited state. Now will you tell me exactly what took place between you? Katherine, I don't feel well. Tell me all, without forcing me to put many questions.'

'That is what I wish to do, father. Very little took place between us. He came back from Hamburg this morning without writing to say he was coming. He came here, and I was out. Mother told him where to find me, and he came into the park to me.'

Here Mr. Carey interrupted her by saying: 'Then your mother knew where you were?'

'Yes; she told him where to find me, and he did find me.'

'That's better! Go on!'

'I was in the park with Mr. Barrington.'

'Well, don't stop.'

'Roger came up to us looking very cross. After a few words had been said, Mr. Barrington

left us, and Roger came home with me. He said he wanted to talk to me, and I was quite willing to be talked to, for I had something to say to him myself; but I was rather frightened, and asked him to wait two or three minutes, and ran upstairs to think how I was to begin. I kept him waiting too long, though I did not know I was long, and he left the house in a very bad humour.'

'And you had no quarrel—nothing more than this passed?' said Mr. Carey, in a voice which betokened that his load of care was somewhat lightened.

'He wrote that letter there—read it if you like—and I was just going to answer it when mother came. You came soon after. That's all—now I have told you the truth.'

Mr. Carey read the note, and said: 'Then do answer his note, and take care what you say, for he is extremely angry; and what's more, I don't wonder. It is a very odd thing for you to be walking about in the park with Mr. Barrington—most extraordinary—and can't be allowed for a moment! I hope you don't make a practice of it—Roger says you do. When did you last see him there?'

'On the 2nd of May. I remember the day, because it was the day of the Academy Private View.'

Mr. Carey looked puzzled. This was the middle of June. If she had not seen Barrington since the 2nd of May, Roger was unreasonable, for there was little to complain of.

'You are sure you have not walked with him since the 2nd of May?'

'Quite sure.'

'Tell Roger so, then. Write him an affectionate letter at once, and I'll take it. He is at the office now. We agreed that he was to wait there till I saw you, and went back to him. Write a line, and I'll take it—come, I have no time to lose.'

'No, father! If you are going back to him, there is no need for me to write. Tell him from me that I am very unhappy and grieved to cause him pain, but that I cannot be his wife.'

Mr. Carey started up, and said: 'Not be his wife! Don't take a few unpleasant words so seriously! Not be his wife! My dear good girl, you don't seem to know what you are talking about.'

'Yes, I do. I don't love him. I long to be freed from my engagement.'

Mr. Carey's countenance fell, and he had to support himself by one hand against the table. But he was so nervous that he could not keep his hand steady.

'You say you want to be freed from your engagement, child—you must be mad! How can you ever find a husband like Roger Hackblock? You must be stark mad.'

'No, I am not mad, and my mind is made up.'

Mr. Carey dropped into his seat again, saying, with a groan: 'Then let me tell you that you have made up your mind to something which will cost your mother's life, and probably mine too.'

Katherine almost smiled, his words seemed to her so much stronger than the occasion merited. She resented such exaggeration; but as she remained silent and seemed to be convinced of the truth of his own assertion, she said:

‘Why should it cost my mother’s life?’

‘I will tell you. Your mother’s life depends on comfort, and care, and good nursing. When she is deprived of these things, there is nothing for her but death. You must know that yourself.’

Katherine did know it—knew it so well that the very suggestion of such deprivation brought an odd sense of tension at her heart which amounted to pain; but she fought against it, and said:

‘But why should she be deprived of them?’

‘If you break off with Roger she must be—there’s no help for it; she must. Child, you don’t understand things. It’s no fault of yours that you don’t. I’ll explain. I am a partner in Hackblock, Higgins, and Hackblock—even you know as much as that—but I brought nothing into the business except power of work and good will. I have now been a partner for nearly twenty years. It will be twenty in the beginning of November, and then our term of partnership expires. When that time comes we shall have a meeting, when all the books will be examined, and everything gone into.’

Katherine was listening most sedulously, but to her all this had no meaning

‘Of course, when that day comes, the partnership is dissolved,’ insisted Mr. Carey. ‘Each partner will then have his share of profits assigned to

him, and then our firm will either re-construct itself with the same partners as before, or some of us may be left out. You understand, don't you, that a partnership is only a matter of mutual agreement—none of us has any right to insist on being taken in.'

Katherine feared that she did understand, but to be quite sure, said: 'Do you mean that there is any chance of the Hackblocks turning you out of the firm if any of us did anything to offend them?'

'That's just what I do mean! Every chance of it, I should say. Hackblock is a stern, unforgiving fellow! He is my partner, but that does not shut my eyes to the truth. He would most certainly work me out—he has all the power—Higgins is worse than nobody.'

'Well, be worked out: let him do exactly as he likes; and if he does behave so ill, just you set up another business! You know how to manage it quite as well as he does—a great deal better, I should say; you are far cleverer than he. Set up another business of your own, and defy him!'

Mr. Carey buried his face in his hands, and almost groaned as he answered:

'But the money, child—tell me where that's to come from? I have spent more than I ought for years—my house costs me too much; everything costs me too much. I found out years ago that I was overdoing myself, but could not bear to think of moving into a small house, or living in a poor way, when your mother would feel it

so terribly! It will have to be done some day, but things must go on as they are as long as she lives.'

'Haven't you enough to retire on, father? Mother would understand your living in a less expensive way, if you retired from business altogether—she would think that you were willing to have less money for the sake of seeing more of her.'

He shook his head. 'If I retire, I retire on nothing. Every day makes my position clearer to me. I did not know how much I had overdrawn until all this overhauling of the books began. Hackblock has money without end, and has left thousands in the business that I knew nothing about. I thought he drew out his profits just as I drew mine. Higgins has done the same, he has hardly drawn anything for years, when the books are made up, it will be found that I have had every penny that I am entitled to.'

'Explain to me exactly what this means,' said Katherine, speaking slowly and painfully. She was straining every nerve to understand.

'It means that if they like to press me hardly, I'm a beggar! That instead of having money to draw, I may even have money to pay—money I never can pay, for it is gone! They can if they like decline to renew my partnership. They can do exactly what they choose, for I am at their mercy! I'm not one bit better off than I was twenty years ago, when it was thought such a generous thing for them to take me into the firm!'

‘At any rate you are not worse off, father. They thought it advisable to take you then, of course they will do the same now.’

Mr. Carey made an attempt to speak, but failed. Very anxiously Katherine said, ‘Father, do you really think they would decline?’

‘Not if we go on as we are doing now. At present we are dear friends; brothers who work happily together—brothers can quarrel though—how do you think we should work together if you broke off with Roger? You know how his heart has been set on marrying you ever since he was a boy! Katherine, that engagement has been my very salvation! Until you promised to marry him, I used to be in despair, when I looked at your poor dear mother, and thought that my criminal folly might perhaps be the means of bringing her to the grave in misery. How could she struggle? Can you imagine her in dismal lodgings in some cheap neighbourhood, without even a servant to wait on her?’

The shock of this revelation was overpowering to Katherine. She had thought her father so rich—believed herself to be placed so high out of reach of miserable money misfortunes, so certain never to lose her happy home so long as she chose to keep it. It was maddening to have imperilled their whole future by simple want of thought! She raised her wretched eyes to his, but did not speak. Even then outward objects smote painfully on her senses, and she was dimly conscious that her room was crowded with luxuries

off all kinds, which had cost large sums of money. Books, china, furniture, everything, there was of the best and bravest, nothing had ever been thought too good for her. On all sides though she saw these things without knowing that she saw them, she was somehow made aware of sheeny satin, or bright mirrors, or gilded ornaments which pitilessly flashed in her face the bitter fact that for them and for things like unto them, the stable foundations of home and its happiness had gradually been filed away.

Mr. Carey continued, 'I ought to have put by a large sum every year so as to make myself independent of them, but I've not, and that's the mischief of it! Well, it has not gone in selfish indulgences, I haven't that to reproach myself with. It was for her that most of it was spent, and I did not discover that I was exceeding what was prudent until she was so accustomed to the little luxuries which I gathered together about her, to make her unhappy life more bearable, that I could not find it in my heart to take them away from her. You don't know what I've suffered. It is a terrible thing to a man to draw cheque after cheque when he knows that he is using the very life-blood of his business life, that he is putting himself at the mercy of those with whom he is associated.'

'But, father, if we retrenched now we might save quantities of money; there are many things which we could do without.'

'Very few in your dear mother's lifetime;

besides, that does not so much matter now: it is the getting over November peaceably which is so critical; if they renew my partnership, I can retrench, or do anything. Katherine, you must help me.'

Katherine had expected her father to talk to her like a dread tyrant, and lo, he was a humble suitor for her help! Alas! she felt that this course which he had taken was infinitely more difficult to resist than any amount of wrath.

'What can I do?' said she, faintly.

'Let us quietly talk over your feeling with regard to Roger. You say you do not love him.'

'I do not love him at all. I can never marry him.'

'Is there anyone whom you would like to marry better?'

Katherine's ivory-coloured faced flamed crimson. 'Father,' she said, 'don't ask that, even he himself has never asked me that!'

Mr. Carey understood; this sentence was enigmatical, but the feeling with which she spoke was sufficiently plain. 'Thank God for that! You must not give up Roger and all that marrying him means, for a mere passing fancy. If you did, you would probably lament your folly as long as your life lasted. It's my duty to warn you, child, and I do warn you; what can you know of the world, what can any girl of your age know of it? You must think, and think hard too, before you make up your mind to anything so serious. Give Roger a longer trial—let your engagement go on six months or a year longer. He is a good steady

fellow, and entirely devoted to you; his family are devoted to you too; what more would you have? You have known them all since you were a child, it's not like going among strangers. You will never meet anyone more likely to make you happy. Roger knows you have no fortune, he takes you without a penny and loves you just the same. His father and mother welcome you as if you were a great heiress. I insist on your giving this a further trial. For my sake, dear Katharine, let things go on as they are for six months at least, and during that time do your very best to love him, and avoid the sight of this Barrington. That will give time for us to reconstruct our partnership on its old footing. It will give me a chance of retrenching quietly in things which won't affect your dear mother's comfort—it will make all right and easy—and it's good advice I am giving you, for you ought to try to like Roger. In this case it is most emphatically true that the path of duty is the path of safety.'

Katherine was silent. Was he not deceiving himself? Was he not turning the path of duty in a self-interested direction? Might not the safety, of which he spoke, be the safety of the family fortunes, and the wreck of the family honour? Alas! she almost feared so. What she understood was this, though the thought was not put in words by her father—that whatever she might ultimately be compelled to do, he wished her, at all events, not to decline to be Roger's wife, until the business of the partnership was once more put on a sure basis. That done, if she still persisted in her

intention, the step he so much disliked might be taken; then she might release herself from her engagement. It would then give him great pain; but if she did it now, it would inevitably ruin him.

Katherine sighed heavily: her heart told her that in six months' time she would not love Roger one whit better than she did now, and that the honest course was to lose no time in telling him the truth. But her father! She looked at him to see how he would bear to hear her say so. His eyes were eagerly fixed on her face: he was trying to ascertain the bent of her thoughts. There was little enough of hope in the poor old man's expression. His hands were straying nervously about the table. Her heart ached for him. There he sat, patiently waiting for her decision. He had not uttered one reproach worthy of the name during the whole interview; and, when she looked back on the past, she could not remember one occasion on which he had spoken unkindly to her. Better marry Roger to-morrow, even if she never knew another hour of happiness, than give pain to her own dear father. And yet how hard it was to consent to what he wished! She would make one last struggle to be free. If she could see any hope of her father's being able to bear her refusal, she would refuse.

'Father,' she said, 'don't look like that! I can't bear it. You make me so wretched. I ought to break off with Roger at once—I feel I ought. If I say I must break off with him, tell me what you would say?'

'It's not what I would say, child, but what I would do. I tell you honestly, I could not face the future—I should quietly put myself in the river!'

'Dear father, no, you would not; but it is agony even to hear you say such a thing! Go to Roger, and say what you like.'

'You promise me to let your engagement go on for six months longer?'

'Yes.'

'And you feel that you can keep your promise? It would not do to promise and fail!'

'I can keep my promise, and I will,' she replied resolutely.

'Katherine,' said he simply and gratefully, 'you have saved my life! You are sure that nothing has been said about breaking off?' he added eagerly.

'Nothing.'

'Then he is only irritated, because he found you with that dishonourable fellow Barrington? However, I will tell him you have not seen Barrington since the second of May until to-day. Let me be quite certain that that is true.'

'Perfectly true, so far as seeing him alone is concerned; I have seen him once since then, when he came to call on mother.'

'He must come here no more. If you promise to try to love Roger, your word must be kept in all honour. Katherine, promise me solemnly not to have any further communication with Barrington. I cannot allow it. He has not behaved well. He has taken advantage of your youth, and

your mother's illness. It must be,' said he, 'unless you wish to kill me;' for he saw that Katherine hesitated.

'You must let me write one note to him—it need not be a long one, but I must write it; and then I faithfully promise not to see him again while I am engaged to Roger. There!'

Such was her exclamation; for now she felt that not only had she given up what was dearer to her than life, but that she had entered on a path of difficulty and danger.

'My darling, I am afraid that you really have been letting yourself be rather led away from Roger,' said Mr. Carey, kissing her cold cheek; 'and it's so like a girl to think of tearing herself loose from a thing which begins to feel rather irksome, without so much as making one effort to bear it! It would be very wrong not to try to be true to Roger; and, mind you, you need never give him up for Barrington; for, even if I had a good opinion of him, which, after this, I never shall have, he's not a man whom I would allow you to marry.'

'God bless you, dear,' said he; 'I trust to your promise.'

And then he departed, leaving his daughter alone. There she sat the livelong afternoon, not knowing what to fish for—not daring to pray that heaven would be kind and deliver her from Roger; for her deliverance would bring destruction on her father. Nothing could profit her now. Whether Roger was placable or implacable, was

of little consequence to her. If her father came home looking joyous, one person at any rate would be happy.

CHAPTER XX.

Long. Nay, my choler's ended,
She is a most sweet lady.'
Love's Labour's Lost.

'On my soul
Lies such an infinite clog of massy dulness.'
FORD.

ROGER was only too happy to be reconciled to his Katherine. He was reconciled; and, not being a man of fervours and transports, expected no particular effusiveness on her part on that occasion, and saw nothing to complain of in her demeanour afterwards. In point of fact, he had never really believed it possible that she could wish to break off such an appropriate engagement. He looked on her meetings with Barrington as little more than a thoughtless and indiscreet way of passing an idle half-hour, and on Barrington as a pushing fellow, who took advantage of her inexperience. Roger exacted a promise from her to renounce these walks; and, not content with that, made two or three wise arrangements, all calculated to act as hindrances should she be tempted to break

her word. Katherine had been in the habit of going out at eleven. After this quarrel with Roger, Mrs. Hackblock came punctually every morning at that hour to take her a drive, and he himself devoted the greater part of the afternoon to her society.

Katherine secretly resented this. She hated being watched. She had promised Roger to walk with Mr. Barrington no more. Did he suppose that she was likely to forget that she had done so? She had made another and much more solemn compact with her father. The next six months were to be spent by her in trying to love Roger. She had not given the promise lightly; she firmly resolved to act up to it. She had known him ever since she was a child, and had always loved him as a brother. Nothing could ever make him an indifferent person to her; but what a pity it was that he would not let things go on as they were! It was so stupid not to let well alone! As a brother, she could have loved him for ever—as a lover, she might possibly find herself hating him. She thought of these things incessantly. Sometimes she was touched by his love for herself: more usually she hated him for being so persistent in his determination to have her. It was that determination and that inveterate persistence which had caused all her trouble. She might have liked him better, too, if she had but seen less of him. You must love a man very much before you can endure to see him every day of your life. Every afternoon came Roger—every morning brought Mrs. Hackblock.

There was scarcely an hour of the day when Katherine was out of hearing of Hackblock views of men and manners. Roger's aim in life often struck her as low, but then she didn't exactly know what men's aims ought to be like. She was certain that his mother's were not only low, but sordid. Rich as she was, she wanted to be richer. She left enterprise to the men of her family; if they could make thousands by well-planted strokes of business, they were wise and great according to their kind, and that kind was one of the very highest and best of which male human nature was capable. So far as regarded herself, Mrs. Hackblock took what she believed to be the most elevated line open to her, and if she could make one penny do the work of two, felt that she had a right to be both proud and happy. She was aware of Katherine's little aberration from the right path—knew about her walks with 'a man who sat up late, writing things in a hurry for newspapers'—it was wrong, but the dear child was not to blame; there was no real harm in Katherine; all that could be said was that she had had, so to speak, no mother, and had nothing with which to occupy her mind. Mrs. Hackblock, who often lamented the extravagance of the Careys' way of living, resolved to take Katherine's mind into her own special keeping, and to store it so full of useful knowledge of every description, that no place would be left either for girlish nonsense or for wasteful ideas of housekeeping. Every day during their drives she laboured with this object in view. Sometimes Katherine listened, and sometimes she

did not. When she did, traces of the fact remained for hours.

‘Have you had a pleasant drive, my darling?’ her mother inquired one day.

‘Oh, very!’ said Katherine, with subdued irony. ‘Mother, do you know how to save buying all kinds of traps, and paste, and poison, and things? I’ll tell you. Take a cucumber—every house has a cucumber sometimes, so there is no need to buy one on purpose—just use it when you have it. Pare it—cucumbers have to be pared anyhow, mother, so this costs you nothing. Cut its rind off delicately with a sharp knife, and strew the parings about your kitchen-floor at night, and then you will entirely destroy all your black-beetles.’

Mrs. Carey looked aghast! She lived in an ideal world, into which, up to the present painful moment, no black-beetle had ever penetrated.

‘My dear,’ she exclaimed, ‘I don’t think I quite know what a black-beetle is! Hush! I don’t want to have them described to me! Horrible things! Please don’t mention them.’

‘But I never saw one,’ said Katherine. ‘Mrs. Hackblock says I shall when I have a house of my own. Mother, I thought one good of having servants was that they stood between you and terrible sights of this kind.’

‘Of course they do. What does Mrs. Hackblock mean?’

‘She says these cucumber-parings will save a sixpenny box of beetle-paste, and that I must put

them on the floors myself, because no servant will take the trouble.'

'Poor dear, and you don't like to talk of such things,' said Mrs. Carey, gazing anxiously at her child's pale face.

Why was that face always so pale now? She knew nothing of the scene which had taken place between Katherine and her father.

'Not much. I think I prefer to hear how to clean windows without spending money on wash-leather. Shall I tell you? It will be just as useful to you, dear mother, as it will be to me, for I am quite sure that I shall never trouble myself to do it. Perhaps you know what a wash-leather is—I didn't! Well, it's a soft washing thing that costs a whole shilling, or you may get a good one for tenpence, mother, if you rummage judiciously about in the bundle they bring you to choose from; but if you take a *Daily News*, or *Standard* after you have read it, mother, for you must first get a thorough pennyworth in that way—then if you wet the paper, it cleans the window as well as any wash-leather, and costs nothing. Think of that, mother; it saves quite a penny, and that is something in a house where there is not more than fifteen thousand a-year to spend. Stop, I'll tell you some more economies. Do you know that if the cooks would only consent to use it, you can make the crumbs stick to fried soles by painting them over with milk instead of using eggs; it is not so good, but it saves eggs.'

Mrs. Carey sighed, and said: 'I wish I could

go out driving with you, my darling. I am afraid all this bores you.'

'Inexpressibly! I don't think I should dislike real cooking, but to sit and listen to Mr. Hackblock, doling out scraps of knowledge piecemeal! It may be very useful, but what possible sense is there in telling me that I am to use milk for soles instead of eggs, when I am never likely to use either? If she took me into the kitchen and showed me the difference between the two ways, that might be of some use; indeed I think I should rather like it. Mother, I have a great idea! I'll go to the School of Cookery.'

'Do you want to learn to cook!' asked Mrs. Carey, who could not conceive such a possibility.

'Yes—no. I want to get out of Mrs. Hackblock's way. Besides, it will be the best means of silencing her. She'll hold her tongue when I have gone through a course of teaching at South Kensington, for I shall know more about it than she. Oh, happy thought! Oh, blessed idea! Mother, I'll go to-morrow. I shall have to be there at ten, and stay till five.'

'It will be very hard work.'

'Not half such hard work as having to sit still and listen to her.'

Katherine was unfeignedly glad that she had thought of this. She would thus escape both Roger and Mrs. Hackblock for a large portion of each day, for try as she might to love Roger, she was not equal to keeping up the effort for so many consecutive hours.

Mr. Carey made some feeble objections, but Katherine said she wanted to go, and that was enough. He had always been indulgent to her, and was doubly so now. All was going on well, and he was happy and hopeful. He had let his house in Scotland for the shooting-season; that was so much to the good. He had tried to retrench at home, but that was not so easy. He had never spent a farthing on any luxury for himself, so nothing could be cut down there; and so far as the house was concerned, one dish of vegetables occasionally, seemed to be all that could be dispensed with. He gave up two or three newspapers which had got into the habit of coming to his house, and that done, relaxed his efforts until November came, and the meeting was over which would decide his future. If all went as he hoped, retrenchment would not be so necessary. He felt that all would end well. The Hack-blocks were never away from No. 15. What more could be desired?

Most people know all that there is to know about the School of Cookery, which flourishes at South Kensington. Katherine felt quite a good little kitchen-maid, when in a plain morning-dress, large apron with pocket, bib, and brown-holland sleeves, she stood in the small dressing-room attached to the school, taking a last look at herself just before the clock struck ten. The regular course of instruction comprises one week spent in cleaning kitchen utensils, a fortnight in cooking for artisans, another fortnight of demonstration, when maidens, meek or otherwise, sit in a lecture-room watching

the preparation of dainty dishes, and listening to the reason for each proceeding. Then comes a fortnight in the practice-kitchen, where the pupil has to do cookery of all kinds herself.

There was not time for all this before the school closed for the holidays, so Katherine, after some expenditure of thought, determined to go through the week of cleaning, and then to spend a fortnight in the practice kitchen. She knew she would never have to cook for artisans; besides—the greater includes the less—if she learnt how to make a plum-pudding in the practice-kitchen, that would teach her how to make a currant dumpling or suet-pudding, which was what was taught in the artisans', and so on. She was glad she had come; this was a totally new atmosphere to her, and she breathed freely in it. Dutifully she followed the band of pupils to the kitchens, where a formidable array of dirty pans, kettles, knives, and such like things awaited their approach. The women who entered the kitchen were as motley a group as the culinary vessels with which they were so soon to occupy themselves. All sorts and conditions of women were freely mixed together, and for the time being, placed under the dominion of a couple of servants who wanted to improve themselves; married women who wanted to improve their servants; girls who wanted to be teachers; others who longed to fling themselves into some abysmal gulf of discomfort at home, and thought that they could do it better with a little knowledge in their heads. Very amusing some of these people were! The real ladies accepted the work which was given

them, and set about doing it with hearty good will, saying little or nothing about dirt or difficulty. The would-be ladies tried to assume the airs of princesses driven out of their kingdoms, and kept up a continual buzz of exclamation to the servants, to themselves, and to every one who came in their way, about the strangeness of finding themselves doing such menial work, and the all but utter impossibility of overcoming their unfamiliarity with it sufficiently to be able to win any marks. They prattled much of what Mrs. this or that would think if she came in and saw how they were employed. Most of them showed a strong disposition to avoid all contact with base metals by wearing cheap dirty white-kid gloves. None of them had apparently ever been brought face to face with a black pan before, nor did any seem to have been positively informed that kitchen utensils did not clean themselves. Even Katherine, ignorant and useless as she had become by dint of hard training, produced a considerable change in the appearance of one of the objects committed to her charge, before some small tradesmen's daughters had nerved themselves to the effort of taking off their gloves.

She, and a rather forward young person with a good deal of silver jewellery dangling about her, had been sent into a corner with a brass pan, an iron pan, and a tin kettle a-piece to clean before twelve o'clock.

'Oh lor! and aren't some of the young ladies here vulgar!' said this young person to Katherine, as she went. 'One can't help wondering where

they can have lived. I am so glad I've been put with you. I stared hard about me, as soon as I came in, for some people of my own sort, and just wished they would set me and you on to work together', and you see they have! Pans to clean, have we? How funny Mrs. Tallmadge would think it if she saw them giving me pans to clean, but I am not going to make a fuss, even if I have worse to do than that, so let us begin. Mrs. Tallmadge need never know, unless I go and tell her.'

The speaker was a fair, freckled girl, stout and comely, brisk in her movements, and remarkably aggressive. Katherine gave her a few civil words, and much elbow-room, but she had a talent for getting into disputes with those around her, and was not long in exercising it.

'I haven't the pleasure of being acquainted with your name, miss, or I'd certainly use it when addressing you,' said she to a very pretty girl on the other side of her, who was likewise cleaning a pan. 'I mean no offence either; but I wish to observe, as a lady to a lady, you know, that you keep dipping your hand into my silver-sand jar instead of your own, and I don't like it.'

Having said this, she looked at Katherine to see if she was admiring her courtly grace of manner.

The girl thus addressed, a slight ladylike young creature, shrank back for a moment from this voluble attack, but soon recovered herself, and begged pardon.

'Nay, meet me civilly, and I'll treat you civilly,' said she of the bangles, much mollified.

‘That’s my way, and anybody will tell you it is. I am so glad to find myself working with persons of my own sort that you may take as much sand as you choose, if you like mine better than your own. People tell you that you need not mind coming in contact with the vulgar herd at places like this, for you have nothing to do but shake off both them and their ways and words when you get home again, but I like to hold myself aloof from what’s vulgar when I can, and I do believe it’s best! Oh my! Young woman, do take care what you are about!’

This was addressed to a girl who, after spending a long time in cleaning a carving-knife and fork, suddenly caught sight of a teacher who was disengaged, and that being a very unusual occurrence, made a charge in her direction, knife in hand, to know if it was necessary to do any more to it. The teachers, as before said, were a couple of comely, obliging servants, who went from one pupil to another explaining, directing, and seeing if the work was up to the mark. Many a mistress might with advantage have taken a pattern from these maids, for though for once the tables were turned, and it fell to their lot to order the mistresses about, they did it most sweetly and prettily. There was no abuse of power, and, strange to say, no undue elation when the weary ladies, after struggling for hours to get things bright which didn’t want to be made bright, at last committed moral suicide, and exclaimed that ‘it was simply shameful to ask people to make their arms ache with trying to

clean things which had been used! How could anything be expected to look really bright unless it was fresh out of the shop?

Katherine's pretty hands were full of soap and sand with which she was scouring the iron pan. Her brass pans were bright and clean, and lovely to behold; but her back ached, her feet were weary with standing, and her day's work was not half done! 'I had not the slightest idea that servants worked so hard!' said she to her companions in toil. 'Had you?'

'Servants! I never think about servants!' said the girl with the bangles and locket. 'Why should I? So long as they move about quickly, and get me all I want, that's all I think about them! Mrs. Tallmadge often tells me what fine easy times I have, with nothing whatever to do but ring the bell and give my orders.'

'I always think our servants have a great deal to do,' said the girl on the other side. 'But I never knew that their work was so tiring. They don't make their things so bright as we are doing, but perhaps we shouldn't either if we had to do them every day of our lives.'

'Every day! Oh lor, how can you talk of such a thing? Mrs. Tallmadge cried out the minute she heard I was coming here, "Jemima Jane won't have patience to go through a week of such hard labour," and there you are talking of my doing it every day of my life! Not if I know it. No indeed!'

Katherine felt inclined to smile; the other girl perhaps did smile; at any rate Jemima Jane thought

she did, for she exclaimed indignantly, while a warm flush overspread her cheek:

‘As a lady to a lady, I wish to inform you that to behave as you are doing now is no way of going on at all, and I won’t stand it! Anybody that knows me will tell you that I can’t stand ill-breeding, and it’s very bad ill-breeding to go and laugh in a person’s face.’

‘I beg your pardon. I did not mean to be rude. I don’t think I did smile.’

‘O yes you did, and after that you won’t get me to associate with you!’

Hereupon a teacher came and informed Jemima Jane that no talking was allowed, and that she must attend to what she was doing and not enter into conversation with her fellow-workers.

‘All right!’ observed that young person in an audible whisper. ‘You might have had some reason for coming and saying that to me a few minutes since, but I have just refused to associate with either of these two!’

They took it quietly, which was best, and Jemima Jane became silent. Up to this time she had been the only talker, henceforth the clink of metal alone was heard and the steady rub, rub, of the workers. And so it went on even after the mid-day pause, until at length Jemima Jane suddenly exclaimed, ‘Now I’ve done everything to those things that I mean to do, and I’m off! I dare say I have kept Mrs. Tallmadge waiting as it is. She said she would call for me in her new conveyance and take me a good long drive. Well,

I'll wash my hands—my poor ill-used hands. Good morning to you all!

So saying she departed, and the girl with whom she had had so many little contentions smiled brightly at Katherine and said, 'As a lady to a lady, I can't help remarking to you that I am very glad she has gone! Let us try to work together to-morrow—you and I, I mean.'

'I should like it,' replied Katherine warmly, for her new friend was so pretty and graceful, that it was quite a pleasure to look at her.

'I wonder why Jemima Jane came here?'

'I wonder!' said Katherine meditatively, as she held up a sieve she had been cleaning, to see if she could consider it done. 'Indeed I rather wonder why any of these people did?'

'I'll tell you why I came,' said the other. 'I live with an aunt, and somehow or other she has a tiresome way with her servants and can't keep one more than a month. That's why she and I both thought I had better come here. If I learn how to do everything, we might find some docile girls who would let me train them. Stop, here's the teacher coming, and I do so want to ask her about my pan. Oh no, she is looking at that table. I hope she is telling that poor girl she has scrubbed it very well. We shall have that to do. My pan is not quite clean you say, why I was just thinking it looked quite beautiful enough to be put on one of the drawing-room tables! More lemon!—how extravagant it seems to clean brass with lemons! I know I ought not to talk. Yes. I'll hold my tongue.'

She was silent for a while, but during that time looked rather earnestly at Katherine once or twice, and then said, 'Do you know that your face is quite familiar to me? Excuse me; but are you Miss Carey?'

Katherine almost started, then she said, 'Yes, but how can you know that?'

'Because you are so like those beautiful pictures in the exhibition. A cousin of mine bought them. He raved about them, and was wild to be introduced to you. You have no idea what a fuss he made! Oh, do look at that girl's hands, they are as black and shining as the grate she is busy with; but, as I was just saying, you have no idea how he wanted to meet you! I think once all was arranged for him to do so. Mr. Davenport, the artist, asked him to luncheon at his house one day when you were to be there, and then after all you wouldn't go. He was so bitterly disappointed! Why wouldn't you let the poor fellow have a sight of you?'

Katherine drew back a little. She didn't think that Mr. Carew had behaved generously about those pictures. The invitation to meet him had come while she was ill in bed, but she didn't think she would have gone in any case. 'I was ill,' she said, 'ill in bed, and could not.'

'The Davenports are paying him a visit in the country now; I dare say you know that, though. They are dear people; I like both of them, and so does my cousin. You ought to know my cousin. If he saw you now, he would want a picture of you in your cooking-costume.'

Katherine turned away indignantly.

'Don't be vexed; he is a dear good fellow.'

'If your name is Carew,' said Katherine, after a pause, for she was too much offended at first to speak, 'it is very like mine.'

'No, it's not Carew—my name is Barbara Linley. Now this abominable thing has come clean. I wonder how many marks I shall get for it? Oh, Jupiter! how weary are my spirits! I mean my legs; and that's what Rosalind meant, too. They may say what they like, but I will not clean that gas-stove—it's not in the bond; and those girls have been at it all day, and it doesn't look one bit better—at least, not a big bit.'

Suddenly she was interrupted by the reappearance of Jemima Jane—quite a different Jemima Jane—all resplendent with little bits of gorgeous apparel, which she had brought in her bag that morning to enable her to appear to advantage in Mrs. Tallmadge's 'conveyance,' when it conveyed her into the park or fashionable streets. Now she was in trouble, she came up to where Katherine and Barbara Linley were at work, stretched across the dresser between them without much ceremony, and eagerly examined several pans which were standing there, and then cried in a despairing voice:

'It's no use! It's not there! Oh, what shall I do?'

'What is the matter?' said they, not unkindly.

'Oh, it's something so bad—so distressing! Mrs. Tallmadge would hardly believe me when I told her what I had gone and done. We had

gone ever so far through the park before I found out. She would not really; and I wish she was right—I do. It's partly the fault of you two young ladies—it really is, so you ought to trouble yourselves a little more to help me; for if you hadn't quite upset me, I don't see how it could have happened.'

'We will help you,' said Katherine, 'if you will only say what has gone wrong.'

'It's my ring—my pearl ring; and I've lost it. You see, when I saw how dirty the work was here, and how different from what I'd ever been accustomed to do, I took my ring off. I wasn't going to ruin it with sand and soap and such things, but I hadn't anywhere to put it, and just slipped it on the handle of a small pan that was standing in front of me, until I was ready to put it on again, and I forgot it; and, oh lor! how unpleasant it is! I didn't want to tell every one about that ring, but I shall just have to tell, or no one will help me to look properly. It was my engaged ring. I am an engaged woman!' Here Jemima Jane broke down altogether, and wept.

'We will help you,' said Katherine and Barbara in one breath. 'What was the ring like? and what kind of a pan was it?'

'The ring was pearls,—he said—no, I can't tell you what he said; and, as for the pan, it was just like other pans, only with a handle small enough to let the ring go over it—a little black saucepan, enamelled inside.'

A vigorous search was made; and at last, in

the practice-kitchen, the pan and ring were found. Never was pan so graced before! It had been used and thrust aside, and no one had seen the ring. Had it been observed, an aspirant after distinction might have devoted it to some reproduction of Cleopatra's delicacies of historic fame. Only, alas! the pearls were not genuine. What did that signify, when, to Jemima Jane, they were as dear as the most priceless of real ones could have been? She wiped away her tears; and, in her gratitude for their sympathy, shook hands with both Barbara and Katherine, who had quite won her heart.

CHAPTER XXI.

'We rest—a dream has power to poison sleep;
We rise—one wandering thought pollutes the day.'

SHELLEY.

KATHERINE awoke in a fright—a dream had startled her. A fortnight before, if any one had told her that her rest could be broken by anything so silly, she would have ridiculed the idea; but by going to the School of Cookery, she had laid herself open to an entirely new class of troubles. Now her dreams were haunted by incidents which, though trifling to the last degree, had yet power to torment her. At one time she, the dauntless daughter of some state prisoner, was hurrying to

his dungeon with the pardon to obtain which she had moved heaven and earth. The door of the captive's cell was reached; the gaoler stood dangling his keys while waiting to set him free; but, when she sought in her pocket for the order of release, all that she could find was the tiny half-ounce weight which was always being mislaid in the kitchen at South Kensington! At another, after painfully struggling through the process of making light puff-paste, and finding that she was about to achieve a success, she abandoned herself to delight thereat, and thus forgot to take her great work out of the oven, the consequence being that, when it did come out, it looked like something which Dr. Schliemann would have thought valuable. What awoke her so suddenly this morning was the sight of a lovely custard of her own creation, rising up in tumultuous revolt beneath her all-too-powerless spoon.

She sprang out of bed with something between a laugh and a deep-drawn sigh. It was a relief that nothing had really happened; but it was almost pitiful to think that a heavy-hearted girl like herself could be the sport of such folly. How was it that she never dreamed of the sad things which filled her mind by day, when work left her a moment to think? How many have asked themselves the same question? Who can answer it? Is it in cruelty or in kindness that nature suffers the things which lie nearest to our hearts to form the subjects of our dreams until time's effacing fingers have softened the impression they make on us?

She dressed quickly—she had to do everything

quickly now; for at ten she must be in her place in the practice-kitchen, conning over the recipes by which she was to prepare the various dishes which formed the subject of that day's teaching. She liked the work, and she liked being so tired when she returned home, that little or nothing could be expected of her. As he could not see her during the day, Roger generally dined at No. 15. At this time fatigue, however, supplied her with an excellent excuse for any amount of shortcoming in conversation. She could not always talk. Roger was very good and kind—every one was very good and kind, and she loved them all, and meant, if possible, to make them happy; but she was anything but happy herself, and there were so many things she was afraid she would never forget. She tried to forget them. She could say with perfect honesty that she was loyally keeping her word to her father. She never allowed herself to think of Lewis Barrington—that is, never when she could help it. She could always prevent herself from trying to see him—from looking across the way at his house—from talking of him with Frank and Nancy Davenport; and most honourably she abstained from these things. Never once did she enter the spare room from whence she could obtain a glimpse of him; never once did she take out of the far corner of her desk the note she had received in answer to hers informing him that, by her father's desire, she was to see him no more.

His reply had been short, but it contained a vigorous and pathetic protest against this decision,

and an assurance of affection which it cost her a mighty effort not to give herself the comfort of reading whenever life seemed to be treating her more harshly than she was able to endure. She resisted all such temptations. She had sworn to herself that she would do so, and she kept her word; and so much self-denial from a girl who had never known what it was to practise that virtue, represented no small sacrifice to principle. The truth was, her sense of honour was deeply wounded by the bargain she had entered into with her father. Whether he was conscious of it or not, there was a painful amount of duplicity in keeping on this engagement for any other reason but a strong conviction that, in six months' time, she would, in all probability, be only too glad that she had not been allowed to break it off because of a passing caprice. It was a pity—such a horrible pity and shame—that the interests of her family so imperatively demanded that she should keep on the same terms with Roger and the other Hack-blocks until November and its business arrangements were over!

Katherine hated the thought of it, but there was no escaping this six months' delay or probation, which her father had prescribed. All that she could do was to resolve that she would come out of it as stainlessly as possible. She listened most patiently to Roger's business conversations with her father; she tried to enter into his schemes for the future. She really had a very great affection for him, and she tried to persuade herself that it was even greater than it was. Her

father saw the change in her, and his face grew bright again. Mrs. Carey, too, was happy. Many a time she smoothed down her child's wavy hair, and said:

'Kitty, I am very happy! You think it is hard to die, but it's not so hard when you are easy about the future of those you love!'

Such speeches as these made Katherine struggle more and more to bring her wishes into unison with theirs. If she married Roger, she rounded the lives of those dear to her to perfection. The two families would love each other and live happily together. Barrington, on the contrary, was outside the pale altogether; neither her father nor her mother would care for him. It might possibly be for her happiness to marry Mr. Barrington—supposing he ever asked her to do so, for she was not even sure he would be the misery of everyone else. She sometimes thought she must end by marrying poor Roger, who loved her so, only pray Heaven that when she had done it, that other, of whom she must not think, might keep out of her way. If he approached her with his words and looks, which had such power over her, God pity and help her, for she feared it would be almost more than she could do to shut her heart to him—and yet it must be shut.

Work was the best thing for Katherine, and it was well for her that she had it. To-day, as she dressed in such haste with all these thoughts starting up in opposition to each other in her mind, she began to count up with regret the few remaining days of this work, which had done so

much to distract her thoughts. In four days more her lessons would be over, and the school closed till late in autumn.

‘A note for you, Miss Katherine, and a parcel; the boy is waiting for an answer,’ said a servant who suddenly opened the door.

‘And I have just been praying that he would keep away from me!’ thought Katherine, for instinctively she knew that this note was from Barrington.

The servant stood waiting in open-mouthed interest, for she saw that this was not a common note. Katherine opened the parcel first—it was the play! He had finished it, and sent it to her.

‘You need not wait. I’ll ring when my answer is written,’ said she to the maid, for she was overcome by the sight of the manuscript, and afraid that she would be still more so by the note. This is what it contained:

‘In spite of what you said, I have called at your house since I received your letter. I asked for Mrs. Carey. I was told that Mrs. Carey had left a message that she was afraid that she would not be able to see me any more. Perhaps I ought not to have called, but I could not help it. Am I never to see you again? I send the poor foolish bit of writing I have done for you; will you not tell me if you like it? Let me entreat you to come into the park to-morrow morning. I beg this most earnestly; there is something I must say to you.’

It had been written the night before. Katherine’s heart leapt with desire to yield to this temptation;

it seemed to her that if she could but be with him once more, she would have nothing left to wish for; but it must not be. How could she look in her father's face again if she did this thing? To get rid of a temptation which she dared not dally with, for fear of losing all power of resistance, she took her pen and wrote hastily:

'Thank you very heartily for letting me read the play; thank you also for writing it; but as for what you ask, I cannot do it.'

She sent her note at once, and then she wiped away some tears of bitter disappointment. It was after ten when she took her place in the kitchen. Barbara Linley was making oyster-patties, minus the oysters, which were too expensive to be the subject of an experiment. Jemima Jane was busy with a lobster. Katherine had the other half of it given to her, together with the recipe for making cutlets of the same. All the other girls were in their places, and hard at work. She took the recipe, hoping that it was not like some others which she had to contend with, which, though simple to inanity, were for that very reason more puzzling than tongue could tell.

'Help me to understand this,' said she to Barbara, for her own head was bewildered, and her thoughts busy with other things.

'Let me help you,' said Jemima Jane; 'I know all about it. Break up your lobster, just as I have done mine. Stop; just because I have left my place for a minute to speak to you, that meddling girl is off with my head! I'll not have it! That's my head, and not yours! It's only five minutes

ago since you tried to carry off my best claw! How pale you look, Miss Carey, and me too, don't I? One oughtn't to go into society when one is working in this way! I felt quite queer last night when I was dressed up prettily for visiting, me that had been standing all day on a floor strewn over with sawdust. I kept hoping all the time that none of the great folks there knew what poor little Jemima Jane had been doing all day!

Katherine worked mechanically, hardly hearing what anyone said, but somehow conscious that her friend Barbara was pitying her, and that poor Jemima Jane, vulgar though she was, meant to be kind. 'I suppose,' whispered the latter, 'you are in love, as I am, and that makes you look so dreadfully unhappy and queer. How one does get one's self put out at such critical times! Such little silly things do vex one! Keep up your heart. You are perhaps thinking him unkind about something or other, but depend upon it, he doesn't mean it.'

'It's not that,' said Katherine, indignantly. 'It's nothing of that kind, I assure you!'

'Oh yes, it is. Don't I know what being in love looks like, and so I ought, too, when I am an engaged woman! Well, we won't talk about it if you have a delicacy. I had a delicacy myself at first, and can understand. Come, and I'll show you how to pound that lobster. Did you ever see such a pestle in your life! it's ten feet long! Take a look round; we are a busy lot, aren't we?'

Katherine thought almost every word that

Jemima Jane said odious, but was too much cast down by her grief at what had happened to be able to do anything but quietly obey. She did obey, and looked round when bidden to do so. Bright, happy-looking girls were working as they had never worked before. Some were whipping creams, or decorating moulds, others beating whites of eggs up to pyramids of flaky froth, or fighting a hard battle with Genoese pastry. 'Look at my méringues!' said one, holding up a trayful in triumph.

'What a shame they don't let me have oysters to put in my patties!' lamented Barbara. 'It's not truth in production, as my cousin Coventry would say.'

'What can that be?' exclaimed Jemima Jane, not unnaturally; and then she added, 'But how crooked your patties are, and how tall!' So they were. Barbara had made her pastry so light, that, as Browning says of virtue in a particular case, it had toppled over to the other side and become a vice; her patties were like so many leaning towers of Pisa. Jemima Jane flung questions about at random, and never waited to have them answered; she administered rebukes also, and never so much as looked to see how they were taken. She was busy, and did not care. 'We must have a *liaison* of some kind,' said one girl, in her hearing. Jemima Jane did not know it was a well-known culinary term, and was down on her in a moment for her questionable language. Another girl spoke of 'greasing a dish,' and was reproved for not saying 'buttering a mould.'

In the afternoon, strangers are admitted, and

the handsome lady-superintendent conducts them through the building, explaining all they see. They pass quickly through the kitchens, and most of the girls are much too busy to be aware of their presence. Katherine was at the end of one of the tables and engaged in the difficult task of moulding a certain portion of boiled fish and mashed potatoes into the form of a well-grown, handsome haddock. She had got so far that she was tracing scales on his back to complete the resemblance, when Jemima Jane exclaimed:

‘Oh, Lor’! how disagreeable it is when gentlemen will stare you out of countenance! I am sure that young man need not trouble himself to go on staring that way at me, for I am an engaged woman, and it is a very great pity that he doesn’t know it, and then he could save himself the trouble!’

Katherine looked up and saw Lewis Barrington standing at some distance from her with the superintendent, who was explaining, as she believed, all the arrangements of the place to a gentleman intimately connected with the public press, and certain to use the knowledge she was giving him in some brilliant and beneficial article. Barrington of course had come to see Katherine, and it was at her that he was looking, and not at her vain companion. Katherine turned and let fall the knife with which she was making the curved lines of her haddock’s scales.

Barrington ran forward to pick it up, their hands met, their eyes met, and while stooping he said in low voice, ‘How can you treat me so

hardly! Let me see you. Let me speak to you this afternoon on your way home.' No one heard what he said.

Katherine murmured a faint 'No, no,' and thanked him just as she might have thanked a stranger; more she dared not do.

'And then, you see, Mr. Barrington,' said the lady-superintendent, 'this is not the only kitchen; there is another very good one through that door; the ovens are there, and the teachers go from one to the other; you would——' but the rest of that speech was lost by their passing through the door.

'Lor'!' said Jemima Jane, 'I do believe that young man is quite smitten with me! Didn't he look like it, Miss Carey? I am sure I never expected to make a conquest in this queer place, and me dressed like this, just nohow. Well, he needn't trouble to fall in love with me, for he'll not get me, for I am bespoke.'

'Somebody ought really to have the charity to tell him you are engaged,' said Barbara, laughing, but just then the teacher came, and they had to be silent for a minute or two. Jemima Jane, however, began to pull up her brown-holland sleeves and give other touches to her dress.

'You needn't do that,' said Barbara; 'they won't come back this way; they will go out by the artisan's kitchen.'

'That's all you know! I am quite certain that he will persuade her to bring him back through our kitchen. He was quite took, I am certain.'

She was right. They did come back, and Barrington tried to make his companion spend a minute or two by Katherine's table.

'I see you don't despise a *réchauffé*,' said he, looking at Katherine's haddock.

'Oh, we teach a little of everything,' said the lady, and glided on.

He lingered, hoping to obtain one look from Katherine. At last she could not help raising her eyes to his. His seemed to entreat her to grant his request, but all that he could see in hers was the deepest sadness.

'Nice young man, that!' said Jemima Jane. 'I wonder what has brought him here, though. He can't care about a place like this. Has he seen some of us coming in, and taken a fancy to us? Wouldn't it be funny if that was it? I'll bet you a great deal that's just what it really is.'

She was longing to be teased about him, but no one spoke—neither Barbara nor Katherine chose to take a part in such conversation; but Jemima Jane did not resent their silence. Poor girls! they were mortified at her receiving so much more notice than they did.

'Barbara,' whispered Katherine, for by this time they were very friendly, 'how are you going home?'

'Aunt is going to send the carriage for me to-day,' was the answer.

Both Barbara and Katherine usually employed the porter to get cabs for them, but to-day the latter was afraid to go home alone, and as Barbara

was staying at an hotel in Jermyn Street, thought they might go together.

'Take me with you,' said she in a whisper. 'I have a reason for wishing not to be alone. I wish you would be so kind as take me home.'

'Of course I will, with the greatest pleasure,' said Barbara; and then poor Katherine divided between her strong wishes and her duty, could have cried her eyes out at having deprived herself of the bliss of a few minutes' walk with Barrington, who would, she felt sure, be waiting for her in Exhibition Road. 'However wrongly I may be acting,' thought she, 'it is not altogether my fault. If Roger were away there would be no harm in loving Mr. Barrington, and I am trying to do my very best to behave well! Three or four days of July, and then all August, September, October, November, and December must pass, and after that if I don't love Roger I shall be free to say so; but how can I love him if Mr. Barrington begins to follow me about as he is doing now? It is very cruel of him!'

'Won't it be odd if I meet that nice-looking man somewhere on my way home!' said Jemima Jane, as she gave a becoming twist to a rosebud in her bonnet. 'It will be very rude and disagreeable if he tries to find out where I live by watching me; but I'll just show him that I'm above such goings-on, and walk past in a really dignified way. Even Mrs. Tallmadge can't help owning that no one can come up to me for dignity when once I begin.'

'I wish you would begin then,' said Barbara

impatiently, for she saw that Katherine was unhappy, and was afraid that Jemima Jane worried her.

Jemima Jane turned round, and fixed an angry little eye on Barbara, while saying:

‘Leave my dignity to me to manage. I know best when to put it on, and when not! Good-bye, dear Miss Carey; lie down a while when you get in. I always lie down myself when I feel all-overish, and that’s how you are feeling, I fancy. Good-bye, dear!’

Strange to say, Katherine felt soothed even by such uncouth sympathy as this. ‘Tears started to her eyes at the least word of kindness, she needed it so much, and yed had to conceal all that gave her a claim to it. She put her hand in Barbara’s, and together they went through the garden to the carriage, and the moment the door was shut on them, she threw herself back and looked at the blue cushions opposite and at nothing else. She felt that Lewis Barrington was somewhere in the neighbourhood—why should she give herself the pain of seeing him, when to see him was only to pass him coldly by?’

‘Oh, look, Katherine!’ said Barbara. ‘I do believe that dreadful Jemima Jane is right, and that that gentleman really has taken a fancy to her. Let us see what she does when she finds out that he is there. They’ll meet in a minute. Let us both look back.’

‘I don’t want to see,’ murmured Katherine; ‘my head aches.’

'I was afraid it did. Oh, he has never so much as looked at her. He can't have wanted to see her pretty face again. He must live somewhere near. Well, she walked past him without looking either, just as a lady would have done. I shouldn't have given her credit for it; but we shall hear quite a romantic story to-morrow—that's certain!'

Katherine felt as if she didn't want to go to the school to-morrow. If Mr. Barrington had found out that she went there daily, he might make another attempt to see her. It was so hard to have to deny herself that pleasure, and how hard, too, it would be to have to stay at home and lose the distraction of her cooking lessons. She began to wish that she could leave London for a time. If she could go away and stay until these painful five months which lay before her were over, life would be more bearable. The more she thought of it, the more the idea pleased her; but how could she go away? It was impossible to leave her mother. Barbara found her unusually silent, but had a firm belief in her headache.

'Good-bye till to-morrow, dear,' said she, and Katherine said the same.

She went to her own room to wash away all trace of tears before going to her mother, but when she opened her bedroom door, a sight met her eyes for which she was totally unprepared. She saw her own travelling-boxes standing, one half filled with neatly folded dresses, the other packed, covered, corded, and directed. She stooped

to read the direction, and saw: 'Miss Carey, Lockhart's Hotel, Princess Street, Edinburgh.' She rang for her maid at once, and inquired what this meant.

'It is all right, miss,' said Pritchard meekly; she was well accustomed to what she called Miss Katherine's tantrums. 'Don't be angry with me; I've done nothing but obey orders. Mrs. Hackblock came about one o'clock to say that Dr. Andrew Clarke had ordered her to try mountain air, so she was going to start for Scotland next day, and wanted you to go with her; and Mrs. Carey, miss, she kind of jumped at the notion, for she has been troubling herself a long time, without expressing her trouble to you, because you looked out of health.'

'But you don't mean that I am really to go? Is it fixed?' said Katherine, who, now that her wish was so suddenly granted, and she was going to be taken away from London, hated the idea of leaving home.

'Yes, miss, you are to go. Mr. Hackblock and master settled it first in the City, and then Mrs. Hackblock came here; and, Miss Katherine, it's really better for you, for with poor mistress as she is, she can't be moved into the country this year, and you see in that way you would get no manner of change at all.'

'Is no one else going? Mr. Hackblock and Mr. Roger, I mean?'

'Yes, Mr. Hackblock is, but not Mr. Roger; at least, not the whole time. That's what mistress told me.'

‘And you, Pritchard? Am I not to have you with me?’

‘They seem to think that I had better stay at home,’ said Pritchard grimly, for she wanted to go.

Katherine ran to her mother’s room.

‘Your father wishes it,’ said Mrs. Carey. ‘He says he is certain that it will be better for you.’

Katherine bowed her head—perhaps her poor mother spoke prophetically—and she resigned herself. Certainly, if many such trials as that which she had just surmounted lay before her, it was better that she should be taken from them. She scarcely knew what she herself wished; possibly the desire to be taken out of temptation was her strongest feeling. She went to her room, threw herself down on the floor, and watered her box with tears. She was to go early in the morning, but did not know when she was to return. She knew that she could stay at home if she expressed a great wish to do so; but she dared not do that, for never in her life had she felt so weak as she had felt an hour or two ago, when it had behoved her to be so strong. About seven o’clock she crept into the spare room, and looked across at Barrington’s house. As she was going away for so long, she thought she might allow herself that one empty joy. It was not altogether an empty joy. Barrington was standing at his window, gazing vacantly at the walls which hid her from his sight. Both were too sad to remember trifles; they were standing in front of their

sheltering curtains, and saw each other. He clasped his hands as if in entreaty; she sadly shook her head, and crept away.

CHAPTER XXII.

‘We think caged birds sing, when indeed they cry.’

VITTORIA COROMBONA.

AUGUST and September had come to an end, and October was beginning, yet Katherine was still in Scotland with the Hackblocks. She was not unhappy. They were kindness itself, and it was such a relief to be taken away from a house which stood so near that other house at which she was bound in honour not to look, and a still greater relief to be safe from notes from Mr. Barrington, and all chance of meeting him. She thought she had driven him out of her mind—to her, her heart seemed dead. She lived from day to day, doing what the others did, and feeling so tired when she went to bed that she fell asleep at once. Roger had been backwards and forwards for a week or two at a time. They had sailed on lakes together, and ascended mountains, and in one way or another had seen most of the finest scenery in the country. Everything was delightfully new to Katherine, whose knowledge of Scotland was restricted to what could be gained during the course of easy drives near her father’s house. Now

she had companions in full health, of abundant kindness, and rich enough to deny themselves nothing. Roger had never been so gentle and good to her before. He knew something which she did not, and pitied her as we pity one about to undergo a great misfortune of which he is entirely ignorant. This made him much more tender and delicately respectful to her than it was otherwise in his nature to be. He who came and went had repeatedly seen the Careys during the time that Katherine had been away from them, and knew that Mrs. Carey was considered by her doctors to be in much worse health than in the summer, and certain not to see the beginning of a new year. She was the one who had insisted on this being concealed from Katherine a little longer. Katherine was well and happy—let her remain so; trouble would come soon enough. Roger saw that she seemed out of spirits, and supposed it was on her mother's account. What would she feel if she did but know the truth? Whenever he was able to be with them, he made it his business to fill her days so full of hard but pleasurable sight-seeing, that she had no time to dwell on home-troubles. She was sensible of his kindness, and gentle and kind too, though often very silent; but Roger was not one who cared for much conversation, except with business men and on business matters. So long as she looked handsome, and smiled when she saw him, and showed interest when he spoke, that was about as much as he demanded of her. She avoided being left alone with him, but he did not observe that, for

there were very few opportunities for solitary walks or talks, as Mr. and Mrs. Hackblock were quite as active as the young folks, and always accompanied them.

Mrs. Hackblock was still fond of statistics, but in a different way. For the present it was a matter of complete indifference to her what things cost—they might be cheap or dear as they liked, only she much preferred them to be dear, for in that case she had the comfort of thinking that her natural enemies, the hôtel-keepers, were getting less out of her than they would have wished. She had given up teaching Katherine, and all her housekeeping maxims and monitions were left at home. This was because she herself was acting in obedience to one of them, and that a very salutary one, viz., when you go away for your holiday, don't take your work with you. They had been spending a week at a lovely place on Loch Etive, and now they were driving Roger to the station, for his visit had come to an end. They were to follow him in less than a month. It was, however, doubtful whether he would be able to come North again. Mrs. Hackblock was urging him to do so.

'Tell him, Katherine,' said she—'you can persuade him better than I can—tell him he must make time to come back to us for a week or so at the least. We have all been very happy here.'

'We really have!' said Katherine. 'Most happy. Everything is so beautiful; and it is a pleasure even to breathe the air. It would do you good, Roger; you will come back in a week or so if you can, won't you?'

'You may rely on that, Kitty dear; but it's too bad to throw all the work on your father. If I go away, he is the only one of us at home.'

'But I know he won't go away unless mother does: and you said he looked well and happy.'

'I said he looked well,' began Roger, wondering how to end that speech; for, indeed, Mr. Carey was not looking happy.

He gazed affectionately in Katherine's beautiful but anxious face, and said:

'I'll go and see him as soon as I get back, and then I'll tell you exactly how he is looking: and yet he knew that Mrs. Carey would not suffer him to do that.'

As soon as Roger's train was gone, they crossed the lake to an hotel on the other side of it. They had seen it on one of their excursions, and had taken a great fancy to its appearance. Its walls were white-washed, and covered with roses; its garden sloped down to the water, and was full of flowers; and in the centre of the lawn was a brilliant fountain, in which was imprisoned a crimson ball, which was thrown up in every jet of water, and then fell back, and was thrown again.

This pleased Mr. Hackblock mightily. He said he could sit and watch it all day: it made him feel so deliciously busy, and yet so agreeably idle. Everything pleased Mr. Hackblock. It was a delight to him to have an under-cooked egg given him for breakfast; he enjoyed the thought that, if he sent it away to be boiled a little longer,

the loss of time was of no consequence. He was in no hurry about anything; he could even sit and eat shrimps and prawns at breakfast; leisurely peel his walnuts at dinner, and do just as he chose, whereas in London it was as much as a servant's place was worth to keep him waiting five minutes. His happiness did not make him look happier; he still looked a grim cadaverous man, who would seem more in his place at a funeral, or presiding at a coroner's inquest, than anywhere else. Dinner was to be at seven, and in the Hackblocks' own room.

Katherine reluctantly left the garden, where she had been watching a most magnificent sunset, and went upstairs to dress. It was still so beautiful that it seemed quite a pity to go into the house. A broad bar of deep amber, lying low on the horizon, was nearly all that was now left; and it, too, was rapidly growing dusky with the coming night. Above it were tracts of wonderful lightness and delicacy—greens that faded into blues, and blues that melted away into lilacs—with filmy little cloud-islands here and there; but all so ethereal and transitory, that to see them was only to lose them.

Katherine had pushed her dressing-table aside to see as much as she could from her window; as she put it back again, her hand brushed against a folded paper lying near the looking-glass. It was a scrap torn from an hotel-bill, and a few words were scribbled on it with a blunt-pointed pencil very hurriedly and illegibly.

‘Be on your guard during dinner; and, if

anything surprises you, do not seem startled, or speak.'

She examined the writing, and for one instant her heart stood still, for something about the way the letters were formed reminded her of Barrington's; but the resemblance was so slight, and the chance of its being from him so infinitesimally small, that she dismissed the idea as absurd. Indeed, before many minutes had passed, she had ceased to think about the matter at all. What was likely to happen that could be of any consequence to her? No doubt the paper had been left by the last occupant of the room. She went and took her place at the dinner-table, and never had she looked better than she did now—in a black lace dress, with some magnificent clove carnations, which she had found in the garden.

'Katherine dear, how nice you look! and how well those red flowers suit you!' said Mrs. Hackblock, pinching her thin lips together in austere enjoyment of this visual delight. 'There is one good thing about Scotland—and that is, you get your sunsets later in the year, than you do anywhere else. Those carnations look quite regal! I do like beautiful colour!' she added, with her cold eyes still fixed on the flowers, and her lips parted in a wintry smile.

Mrs. Hackblock always said that she liked bright colours, and always wore subdued ones. Not only did she choose *teints dégradés*, but she picked out the most degraded of them. She liked what she called a cool, slaty-grey for herself, or a dull blue-black, which suggested nothing more

beautiful than an inkstain. To-night she wore a sad-coloured brown silk, which rustled angrily when she moved. She had, as she thought, rendered it harmonious by wearing aquamarine ornaments, which made her pale face look still paler, and her thin lips more colourless. She smoothed the folds of her dress, and sat rigidly upright in her place opposite to her husband, and with her back to the fine view of the lake, the solemn-looking mountains, and the last vestige of dusky orange in the sky. She did not feel the least wish to change her place—mountains to her were not much more than irregular bits of land, which would not lie flat as they ought; but did some good, nevertheless, by affording shelter to sheep, deer, game, and other things which help good housekeepers to vary their *ménu*. She had looked at these mountains most of the day—that was enough. Her first words were:

‘Well, my dear Nathaniel, have you anything amusing to tell us?’

Mr. Hackblock have anything amusing to tell them! Katherine looked up in amazement. If he had—he who was always so grave and taciturn—that of itself would be a surprise quite great enough to warrant the display of caution recommended by the secret correspondent. But Mr. Hackblock said calmly:

‘I have got nothing to tell you, except that I am extremely hungry.’

Presently he poured out a glass of claret, and tasted it, but it did not please him.

‘Waiter,’ said he. ‘That’s not what I ordered;

you surely don't call that a light claret? At any rate, if you do, I don't!

'I'll see if we have anything lighter,' said the man humbly. In another minute he returned to say how sorry he was, but all the claret they had was 'just as dark-coloured as that.'

Mr. Hackblock laughed; Mrs. Hackblock said it was surprising! Even Katherine was about to utter an exclamation of astonishment, when she remembered the warning contained in the paper she had found, and refrained. Was this the incident which, though surprising and startling, she was bidden to take calmly? Impossible; but it served to put her on her guard.

She was not in a very observant state of mind, but when the fish was removed and some other dish put on the table, she did just remark that the waiter who took her plate away had a very shapely hand, and then she heard Mrs. Hackblock, who had a way of treating servants as if they were animated machinery, exclaim, 'Oh, I am glad that they have sent another man to help to wait on us! We shall get on better now. It was terribly slow work with one.'

Katherine did not care how long or how short a time the dinner lasted. When it was over she would only have to be beaten at chess by Mr. Hackblock; but by way of taking a civil interest in what was being said, she looked up and saw Lewis Barrington, dressed as a waiter, with a napkin in his hand, offering Mr. Hackblock some potatoes. She was so overwhelmed by this sudden surprise that she dropped the wine-glass she was

raising to her lips, and this served to account for the exclamation of astonishment which she could not restrain. She hastily stooped to pick it up, only too glad of such an excuse for hiding her face for a moment. Barrington ran to help her, and actually, in the very presence of the enemy, grasped the hand which she had stretched out under the table to find the glass, and kissed it. It was done in a moment; the next instant he rose up, glass in hand, in the sight of all. Katherine did not recover herself so quickly. Her cheeks burned; her hands trembled with nervousness.

‘My dear, why do you distress yourself about a shabby little wine-glass?’ said Mrs. Hackblock. ‘It is nothing of a glass! I noticed them all when we first sat down. They do very well to drink out of, but are as common as common! Sixpence would replace it even if you had broken it. It is such a pity that you have made yourself so nervous about nothing. Those poor cheeks won’t come back to their own colour to-night!’

‘It gave me such a fright!’ said Katherine.

‘Why, it *has* given you a fright!’ said Mr. Hackblock, sympathetically. ‘You are trembling all over! Take another glass of wine.’

Waiter Barrington filled another glass for her. Katherine hardly dared to breathe when he once more stood by her side; assuredly she dared not look up. To hide her burning cheeks, she bent her head down over her plate. There was a short silence, after which Mr. and Mrs. Hackblock began as usual to congratulate themselves gleefully on their quarters. ‘Nice, comfortable little place this

is,' said he. 'It quite pleases me! All is so quiet and homelike.'

'Very! We see and hear nothing of any other tourists. I should imagine that one might live here month after month without ever feeling one emotion; at least, that's my idea of the place,' said Mrs. Hackblock. 'Now at home there are always little worries and excitements, but here there's nothing to stir one—nothing at all; now is there, Katherine?'

'The scenery is very exciting,' said Katherine, faintly.

'The scenery! How can scenery be exciting?' inquired Mr. Hackblock.

'Don't ask me, for I can't answer you,' said his wife. 'No, there's nothing exciting here, but that's what makes it so delightful.'

'Yes. This settled calm is most healthful,' continued her husband.

'Very, Nathaniel, very. It's what we pay for, and everything really is peaceful. We did feel a little emotion this morning, though, when our dear Roger went away and left us. Didn't we, Katherine? I wish for your sake he could have stayed a little longer, but we shall soon see him again.'

'Very soon', said Katherine, whose cheeks were still crimson.

'He thought you looked much better for the change, and so you do, and so we all do.'

'What does you so much good, Mrs. Hackblock, my dear,' said her husband, with fatal perspicacity, 'is to get away from all the botheration of your housekeeping! I think you take far too

much trouble about your hens and chickens, and apples, and candle-ends, and such-like twopenny matters. After all, one can but be happy here below, and when you have money enough to allow a little waste without losing any of the comforts necessary to existence, I don't see why you should torment yourself and other people by taking so much notice of trifles.'

'Nathaniel! My dear husband! I really do think!' ejaculated Mrs. Hackblock, with eyes upturned in horror and dismay, for in a moment of confidential ease Mr. Hackblock was at one fell swoop subverting all her teaching! She could not trust herself to say more.

'You think what?' inquired Mr. Hackblock, who either did not know how much he was offending her, or did not choose to take a hint.

'I think that, after all the pains that I have taken to drill dear Katherine into being a careful and economical wife to our son Roger, you need not talk in such a very indiscriminate and inconsistent way! You will destroy all respect for me and my opinions. Katherine won't know what to think next time I give her good advice.' And the aggrieved lady turned away from a tempting dish Barrington was just offering her, being unable now to derive any pleasure from partaking of it.

'Oh yes, I shall,' said Katherine, pitying her, and anxious to put an end to a conversation which it was gall and wormwood to her that Barrington should hear, and then she tremblingly looked at him. He seemed to be thinking of her. His eyes were fixed on her in the gratest concern.

'Come, don't stand there doing nothing!' said Mr. Hackblock to him. 'Can't you hand those peas? You might as well be out of the room as in it if you do nothing!'

Katherine blushed to hear him whom she venerated so profoundly spoken to more roughly than she would have spoken to a strange dog; but she consoled herself, for Mr. Hackblock had looked fixedly at the *soidisant* waiter while he spoke, and had evidently not recognized him. Mr. and Mrs. Hackblock had twice been in Barrington's company, once at that memorable first party and afterwards at the haymaking fête. He had, however, made no impression on them on either occasion. Hearing himself addressed in this brusque manner, Barrington started, and began to do his work better than any waiter had even done before. He gave himself up to no more fits of musing, and Mr. Hackblock exchanged a look with his wife expressive of admiration of his power of dealing with such people. Barrington's alertness had, however, its bad side, for now Katherine felt that he must be hearing the conversation, and its tone was not elevated. It expressed smug middle-class contentment, unillumined by any aspiration for anything higher. Both Mr. and Mrs. Hackblock were entirely unaware that there was anything higher. Their highest aim was to pass through the world unnoticed except for unvarying respectability. Their highest hope was never to be worse off than they were now. The only great work which lay before them to do was to set Roger well a-going in the same lines of life which their own feet had trod,

and when that was done, and when little Hackblocks were springing up, whom Roger in his turn would train as he himself had been trained, their work in life would be over, everything would be done, and done well, and they might end their days in peace. All their thoughts, aims, and hopes, were so plainly mapped out in their conversation, and all were so contentedly low and dull, that Katherine found herself shuddering at the part she herself was expected to play in the scheme of their existence, and ready to sink into the earth with shame at everything being thus unfolded to him whose good opinion was to her so precious. Humbly and timidly she ventured to look in his face, fearing to see her condemnation in it. She forgot her fear in a moment—that one look convinced her he loved her still, and that nothing said by those people could change him.

‘You are silent, Kitty dear!’ said Mrs. Hackblock, who only cared for three people in the world, and Kitty was one of them.

‘I am afraid I am,’ replied Katherine, but she could not make herself speak. She was in a whirl of suppressed delight at Barrington’s presence, but at the same time so terribly nervous that she was afraid to trust her voice.

After dinner she played three games at chess. Mr. Hackblock, of course, won them, and then went in garden ‘to see what the night was like.’ They could watch his tall figure walking backwards and forwards for half an hour. Mrs. Hackblock was knitting a drab-coloured shawl, Katherine sitting with a book in her hand by the fire. Mrs.

Hackblock could see that she never turned a page, and said kindly:

'I am afraid you miss Roger. I wish we could have insisted on his staying with us.'

'Miss Roger! Why, of course she does!' exclaimed Mr. Hackblock, coming in at that moment with a great deal of fresh outside air playing about him. 'Ar'n't they lovers, and ar'n't lovers expected to miss each other?'

'Yes, yes, I know that, but Kitty is a dear, affectionate girl.'

Katherine's eyes filled with tears of shame and regret. She was unworthy of their great kindness. She presumed to despise them; how dared she do so? They were at any rate honest and straightforward; what was she? She burned to tell them the truth. She would never feel as if she had a right to hold up her head until she had done so.

'I don't deserve your kindness,' said she hurriedly, and they could see large tears floating in her eyes, as he spoke. 'I am not half so good as you think me! You don't know how wicked I am!' and she burst into a passion of tears.

'My dear Katherine!' said Mr. Hackblock soothingly.

'My poor darling!' said Mrs. Hackblock; 'go to bed. You are overtired—overwrought altogether; go to bed; give me a kiss, and go.'

'Are *you* coming up?' asked Katherine, casting one longing look at Mrs. Hackblock, and wondering, if she received an answer in the affirmative, whether she would have courage to obey an impulse she was now feeling to throw her weakness

on another person's strength, and tell enough of the truth to obtain protection.

Mrs. Hackblock almost divined that Katherine wanted her specially, but her own nature was so cold that, fond as she was of the girl, she could not bring herself to search into fanciful distresses, which she attributed to over-fatigue and regret at parting with Roger. Mrs. Hackblock had the greatest horror of any excitement of mind or manner, and therefore hurried Katherine off without following to inquire further into what was troubling her so much. Had she gone with her, and said one really loving word, she would certainly have heard enough to enable her to save the unhappy girl, now in her charge, from all present danger.

Divided between regret at losing this opportunity of opening some part of her mind to Mrs. Hackblock and relief at escaping the great difficulty which that would entail, Katherine slowly retreated, sick at heart at having to practise such deception; for, however she might deceive herself when away from him, the moment she saw Lewis Barrington she was perfectly aware whom she loved.

Mrs. Hackblock felt a little uncomfortable about not having shown more sympathy.

'Perhaps I ought to have gone upstairs with her, Nathaniel. I am sure she wanted me to go,' said she. 'If I had, it might have been a comfort to the poor child, and she could have told me what was really the matter.'

But Mrs. Hackblock did not like tears or trying scenes, and was quite sure that Katherine would be all right next day. Katherine went to her room and sat down by her window, wondering what she ought to do. She thought she had better throw herself on Barrington's mercy, and entreat him to go away. But how was she to convey a letter to him? He ought not to have done such a wrong thing. He must have bribed the people of the inn, or at all events the waiter. She could not bribe them; what was she to do? She sat by the window for some time. Shafts of light streamed from it and from other windows into the garden, but one by one these were extinguished. Everyone was going to bed but herself—she did not feel as if she could sleep, or inclined to try to do so. She heard a rustling noise—a noise like paper being pushed under her door—and saw something white lying just inside her room. He was there! That was her instantaneous thought, but he dared not knock or speak. It was well that he was cautious, for the Hackblocks' rooms were on the same landing. Very gently she stole across the room, afraid of the sound of her own footsteps. The paper was folded, and only contained two or three lines:

'You will, I am sure, not refuse to see me when I have travelled so far on purpose to see you. It would be most cruel. It is now half-past twelve or soon after, every one in the hotel will be asleep. Don't come if you hear any one stirring, but if all is quiet, I entreat you to come downstairs to your own sitting-room, where you will

find me. I will keep up a good fire, and we can talk for a while in perfect safety. You see that I depend on your kindness, and know that you will come. If I can but see you for twenty minutes, I shall be for ever grateful to you. What miserable months these have been!

‘Shall I go?’ said Katherine eagerly to herself. ‘But my promise!—oh, I must keep my promise! No, I cannot go! I said I would see him no more, and I must keep to it—I will keep to it—I will not see him!’ She flung herself on her bed to lament her disappointment. She was resolved to be firm. Alas! just as the clock struck one, she softly opened her door, and hearing nothing but the beating of her own heart, she slowly and silently went downstairs.

CHAPTER XXIII.

‘N’est-ce pas qu’il est doux
D’aimer et de savoir qu’on vous aime à genoux!
D’être deux? d’être seuls? et que c’est douce chose
De se parler d’amour la nuit quand tout repose?’

VICTOR HUGO.

SCARCELY had Katherine’s faint and frightened fingers touched the handle of the sitting-room door than it opened, and she felt herself drawn into the room by a firm, but loving hand.

‘I know I ought not to have come,’ said she; ‘I did my very best to be good and stay away, but I had such a wish to see you again!’

‘Hush!’ said he, gently leading her in, and then shutting the door; ‘don’t speak till we are inside. How could you think of refusing to see me? You know I love you—you must know that—you must feel that my love is worth a thousand times more than the love of that man to whom you will go on trying so hard to be constant! Come in. Sit down there, and let me have this one chance of speaking to you. I have gone through a great deal to secure it! Come.’

He half put his arm round her to lead her to a chair by the fire. The fire was warm and bright, and the whole room looked mellow with the light it gave. Katherine was cold and chill with her long vigil upstairs, and her heart, after so many weary weeks with the Hackblocks, was just as cold and comfortless. She could have wept with joy at this sudden transition from empty desolation to the fulness of happiness, but she restrained herself. Nevertheless, until this moment, she had never realized how much the separation from Barrington had cost her.

‘My dear Katherine!’ said he, looking at her with eyes full of passionate love. Hers fell before them. She dared not meet his gaze, for she knew that she must conceal what she felt—for her oath’s sake and her father’s, she must if possible deny her love. It was hard to have to do it when he was there, and she loved him so dearly. It was almost impossible to do so if she remained where she was, subject to the fascination and bewilderment of his presence. She must leave him if she wished to hide her love from him; but how hard

it was to go! She granted herself a brief respite, and sat for a while in happy silence. She was resolved to return to her own room in a few minutes, but could not put an end to her delight until she had enjoyed it a very little longer. So far she had said nothing wrong; her only crime had been in indulging herself with this sight of him. But he could not take things so quietly; in another moment he was at her feet, had seized her hands, and covered them with kisses, and was saying, 'Katherine, dearest, do not be ungenerous. Own you love me just a little.'

Katherine tore her hands from his, and rose to her feet to fly from a temptation which was rapidly becoming too strong for her, but he held her back, and said:

'Dear Katherine, be true to yourself and to me. If you do love me, why not give me the happiness of hearing you say so?'

The sound of his voice melted her at once, and she answered:

'I do—I do most truly, but there are so many reasons why I must not say so.'

'What reasons?' he asked impetuously. 'Why should you not say so if it is the truth?'

'Oh, I cannot—must not tell you! Let me go; I ought not to have come here.'

'One minute more,' said he; 'stay one minute, and I'll let you go. I want you to tell me if these reasons will hold good for ever. You don't mean that, do you?'

'Oh no, not for ever.'

'For how long?'

'I don't know; for some months.'

'And then you will own you love me?'

'Yes.'

'And let me ask your father to give you to me?'

'If you think me worth having.'

'But if you are willing to do this then, why not do it now? Is it right to continue to be engaged to Mr. Hackblock now, when you intend to break off with him in a month or two?'

Ah, even he put his finger at once on that black spot in her conduct!

'Of course it is not right, but it is not my fault. I wanted to break off with him in June, but my father would not let me. He was sure I did not know my own mind, and insisted on my making a great effort to like him better. Don't despise me for yielding—I was forced. I have not been playing a treacherous part—I give you my word of honour that I have not—ever since June, when I was made to promise to keep on my engagement to him for six months longer, I have been doing my very best to care for him, and him only.'

'You tell me this as if you thought it was likely to please me. I don't want you either to love him or to try to love him. I should think not, indeed. Katherine, you must love me, and me only.'

Katherine shook her head; then she seemed to put away his professions of love, and answered:

'But you surely must prefer to think of me as a girl who has some idea of honour? You

know that I wrote to say I must see you no more—that you must not write to me; you must know that I have tried to be true to him: so if I have behaved ill by keeping on my engagement till now, it's not my fault, for I was only obeying orders, and I really have tried to love him.'

'And have you succeeded, Katherine?' said he, though he knew that she had not. 'What is your feeling for him? Tell me with perfect truth and honesty.'

'I will—at least, I will try. It is very difficult to explain, because I have known him ever since I was a child. I can't judge him as I would a new friend; he has shared almost every pleasure of my life, been mixed up in all my troubles, and was always there to take the blame on himself, to screen me when I had done anything wrong. Then his father and mother have been such intimate friends of ours, that they are like second parents to me. Roger is like one of our own family, and that of itself seems to make us belong to each other. You must understand that I love Roger very much, but I am not in love with him.'

'In other words, you would have been quite content to marry him, if you had not found out what love was?'

'That is true—quite true; and it is such a pity that things have not stayed as they were,' said Katherine sadly.

'But now?' he said. 'Katherine dear, are you willing to marry him now?'

'I don't know. Don't ask me. My father will be heart-broken if I don't; and I have so much

regard for Roger, that sometimes I have thought I could marry him and be almost happy—if you would but make me one promise—if you would promise to keep entirely away from me!’

‘Dismiss that idea for ever! You could no more be happy with him than I could keep away from you. You might extract that promise from me, but I should break it—I should infallibly break it! You are mine, and mine only; and come what will, I intend to have you.’

Katherine half trembled; then a great sense of relief came over her. She was so glad that the responsibility of decision was taken from her; and, besides that, she did love him so dearly. He was sitting on the floor at her feet, with both her hands in his. By the warm firelight he could see her full deep eyes bent on him with arrears of repressed love in them.

‘It is such a long, long time since I have seen you,’ said he; ‘it has been so sad to look across the street at your poor deserted house, and wonder where you were.’

‘How did you find out?’

‘From dear little Nancy Davenport. They came back to town last week. Frank has been staying in the North with some man of the name of Carew; decorating his house for him, I think.’

‘Yes, I know; I have had several letters from her. So she told you? Frank forbade her to do so.’

‘Indeed; that accounts for many things! Well, I have been following you about from hotel to hotel; but, even when I did find you, I did not

dare to show myself, until your Mr. Roger was gone. Did I wait at table well, by-the-bye?’

‘Beautifully; but you made me so miserably nervous!’

‘And you, do you suppose that you had no effect on me? I can tell you that it was no easy matter for me to remember my duties with you sitting opposite to me, and looking so sweet and delightful. The scent of those carnations seemed to intoxicate me. How gorgeous they did look! and how well they suit you! And to see you sitting there between that grisly old undertaker, and good lady, who looks as if she lived on railway accidents and bloody murders, it was just like seeing a humming-bird in a cage with a couple of sparrow-hawks. Really, both Mr.——’

‘I can’t let you say one word against Mr. and Mrs. Hackblock; you don’t know how good and kind they are! If they did but know what I am doing now, too! It is so wicked! I must go—I will not stay here!’

‘Not stay here! I have not said half I want to say. Dear Katherine, do let me hear you say that you love me! You do a little, don’t you?’

‘Don’t ask me any of those questions until January,’ said she, in a low voice.

‘And then what will you say?’

‘I will say the truth; you know what that is.’

‘Again let me urge you to speak out now, and get the thing over. Tell Hackblock, and the whole lot of them, the honest truth. You ought to do it—don’t be angry with me—you ought

to do it at once, if you are going to do it at all!

Katherine hung her head, and made no answer.

‘You don’t like to do it?’ said he.

‘I can’t! When January comes, I’ll speak plainly to them, and I’ll speak plainly to you. And now I’ll go away; my seeing you here is far more dishonourable than anything else I have done.’

‘You certainly shall not go just yet. Don’t tell them till January, if you will—I suppose I not wait till then to tell you how I love you. I have loved you ever since I first saw you. Ask Frank Davenport what I said the moment I saw you.’

‘What did you say? Tell me yourself.’

‘I said that if ever I married anyone, it should be you. You were giving strawberries to a number of poor little wretches of children. You wore a bright-looking silk or satin, or something, and I thought I had never seen such a beautiful girl in my life! I persuaded Mrs. Dalrymple to take me to your father’s house that night. I saw you again, and loved you still more; and so it has gone on until now. I have never ceased to love and worship you. Do not try to escape me, for you never will; I am not the kind of man to let you go.’

Katherine was terrified by his vehemence. She half rose, saying:

‘It is so late; and I am doing so wrong to be here!’

‘Time was made for slaves!’ said Barrington, who was wild with happiness.

‘We are slaves. We cannot do as we like.’

‘Let us do it. Let us have two or three superlatively happy hours, sitting here and loving each other, and not mind what happens afterwards. Sit down again. Don’t go.’

‘Oh no, no!’ exclaimed Katherine; ‘I can’t do that! You must leave this place at daybreak, and neither see me nor write to me for months; and I must stay here with the Hackblocks, and travel about with them, and go home with them, and be just the same as I have always been, until January comes; and then, if I cannot love Roger, I will tell him so. Go. Do go—leave me, I beg of you.’

Barrington entirely disregarded the latter part of her speech. He did not like the doubtful way in which she spoke, and said in some alarm:

‘But are you likely to love him?’

‘What do you think?’ she asked, looking in his eager face as she spoke, with eyes full of the most earnest and tender affection.

She had risen to her feet to go, some time before; he flung his arms round her, and pressed her to his heart, saying:

‘I’ll bear anything—I’ll do anything, only tell me what you wish. My Katherine, this compensates for all. God bless you, if you must go. You do not know how I love you!’

At this moment—the very moment of their parting—the door suddenly opened, and they saw

Mrs. Hackblock, robed in a grey flannel dressing-gown, standing, candle in hand, contemplating the group before her in stern horror and amazement. The light she bore with her served to show her severe white face, from which every vestige of hair had been scrupulously drawn back under the prim and borderless nightcap which still shrouded her head. At the first glimpse of Katherine and Barrington, she had hardly believed her senses; then she stood utterly aghast and speechless.

Katherine, full of shame, disengaged herself from Barrington's embrace, and then stood by his side waiting, yet dreading, to hear what this grim visitant would say. It was a horrible moment to Katherine; but all at once she felt a loving hand seeking about for hers—hers all too willing to be found. He did find it, and held it in his strong encouraging grasp; and she knew that henceforth he would stand by and protect her.

Mrs. Hackblock saw what he had done, and her indignation at the sight enabled her to speak.

‘Man!’ said she, ‘I insist on your leaving this room.’

‘Allow me first to speak to you,’ said Barrington.

‘Not one word!’ cried she. ‘Don’t attempt to speak to me, for I will not listen! I have something to say to Miss Carey; but nothing whatever to you. Leave the room, I tell you again. How dare you require to be told so often?’

‘You think that I am a servant,’ said Barrington, ‘but I am——’

'I don't care what you are,' interrupted Mrs. Hackblock. 'You are most certainly not a gentleman! You have behaved abominably, and so has that girl; and unless she wishes to hear some home-truths in your presence, she had better tell you to go away at once, for I mean to let her know what I think of her!'

On this Barrington wavered, for it might be a relief to Katherine to be alone with this woman.

'Go, go!' said Katherine to him. 'Leave me now. You can offer any explanation you like—I mean you can say anything you really wish to say, to-morrow.'

'You need not attempt to explain anything to me to-morrow, for I won't see you, and I don't suppose that Mr. Hackblock will stoop to do so either; so will you leave our sitting-room immediately? You no have right here.'

'Please go,' said Katherine. 'Go at once.'

Barrington was going; one hearty pressure of Katherine's hand, one whispered farewell, and he left the room, Mrs. Hackblock making way for him as he went, to avoid all risk of contamination by contact with his clothes. Then she said to Katherine:

'You need not begin to make long explanations or excuses; my own eyes have told me all that it is necessary for me to know.'

For the present there seemed to be no danger of Mrs. Hackblock's being overwhelmed by too many excuses from Katherine, who was standing

by the fire, looking far too miserable and ashamed to speak.

‘Katherine,’ continued Mrs. Hackblock, ‘I couldn’t have believed it! Who could believe that a girl who has had the many advantages that you have had, could have behaved in such a terribly disgraceful way? It is heart-breaking to think of a girl like you stealing down in the middle of the night to have a secret interview with a man who dares not be seen by daylight! It is three o’clock—no, it is more. I have heard voices for a long time, and have been disturbed by them; but no such dreadful idea as that you were one of the speakers ever entered my mind! Katherine, how could you behave so disgracefully?’

‘I know I have done very wrong,’ faltered Katherine—‘wrong in many ways.’

‘Wrong! That does not half express it. Who is that—that man?’

‘He is a friend of ours—he’s not a stranger. We know him in London.’

‘Then all I can say is you know some one who is not a gentleman. He is no gentleman, or he would not have attempted to see you in this underhand manner—and you an engaged girl, too!’

‘All that is my fault,’ pleaded Katherine. ‘He knows very little about whether I am engaged or not.’

‘I don’t see how anyone is to know. You certainly do not behave like an engaged girl——’

began Mrs. Hackblock; but Katherine interrupted her by saying:

‘You don’t know how hard I have tried to love Roger as I ought.’

‘You ought to be ashamed of yourself to say such a thing! You speak as if there was difficulty about loving him. I should think you might be both proud and thankful to have the offer of such a man! What are you and your family, I should like to know, that you could expect such an excellent offer? However, think of him as you like, you won’t have the chance of deceiving him any longer! If you didn’t love him, why did you pretend that you did? Why not have the honesty to tell the truth? We did not want you to marry him against your will. You seem to think that you can marry one man and love another! Thank God that Roger has escaped the danger of marrying such a disgraceful creature! You are a disgrace to your father and mother and everybody. As for your father, you will kill him!’

These last words pierced Katherine to the heart. They were so bitterly—so grievously true. She came slowly forward to where Mrs. Hackblock was standing, and said piteously:

‘Mrs. Hackblock, I entreat you not to tell my father!’ and as she spoke she laid her hand imploringly on Mrs. Hackblock’s arm.

In an instant that lady, who such a short while before had loved her as tenderly as if she had been her own daughter, shook off the poor trembling little hand, and said with shrill eagerness:

'Don't touch me, viper! I hate the very thought of you!'

Katherine quivered with pain, but said:

'I am not asking you to do this for my sake, but for my father's. Again I beg you not to tell him.'

'And why is your father to be spared so particularly? My poor husband will have to be told, so will my dear son. You should have taken your father into consideration before you began to behave so infamously.'

'You use very bad words when you speak of what I have done,' said Katherine, at last goaded to anger. 'I am not ashamed of anything I have done but the concealment, and not breaking off my engagement, and even that has been unintentional. If I had not been engaged to Roger, there is not one thing of which I need be ashamed! I have behaved badly, very badly, but not wickedly.'

Mrs. Hackblock threw up her hands in amazement. 'How you talk! You shameless, wicked, abandoned girl! Perhaps you would like your engagement to go on, and behave in the same way! Perhaps you would like to marry Roger, and behave still worse—if worse can be! Thank God, you are found out! You speak of the hardship of being engaged to my son. All I can say is, if he had had any idea of your true character he would have given up his engagement himself in the greatest horror. He was deceived in you, and so were we. It is over now, and I'll leave you.'

‘Mrs. Hackblock,’ said Katherine piteously, ‘I deserve so much of what you have said to me, that I will patiently bear what is undeserved. Will you sit down for a few minutes, and let me tell you the whole story? I want to tell you the exact truth—I entreat you to listen to me. I may never see you again!’

‘That you certainly never will! you can’t expect it! I shall never say another word to you after to-night!’

‘Then let me speak now, and tell you everything. I know I have behaved very ill, but if you heard all you might forgive some part of my conduct.’

‘I? no, never; I’ve seen enough—I want to know nothing more! I’ll say good-night, and good-bye to you. I leave you to your own thoughts and your own conscience, and shall not be at all sorry if you are miserable.’

‘I can’t help it, then,’ said Katherine, struggling to repress a flood of tears. ‘I have done my very best to be true and honourable—I’ve tried hard——’

‘It is a great pity then that you have had such remarkably poor success!’ observed Mrs. Hackblock, with a terribly bitter sneer; and so saying, she left the room without another word.

Katherine shivered. Already all love was expunged from that heart of cast-iron. Mrs. Hackblock could sneer, and smile bitter smiles, and walk upstairs without casting one parting glance behind her, and go to bed without one thought of passionate sorrow that the girl she had loved

so much should be walking in the highway to ruin! All that she felt was resentment—bitter resentment that anyone whom she had condescended to love nearly as well as her own husband and son, should be unconscious of the enormous favour which had been done her—so indifferent to the splendid lot which it would have secured to her, as to break away from them and choose her own portion in life. It ought justly to be a sorrowful one—sorrowful and perhaps shameful. In the interests of virtue Mrs. Hackblock could not wish it otherwise. All was over between her and Katherine. Once she had loved her deeply, but all that was over for ever. Mrs. Hackblock was not one to feel any void—any longing to be reconciled, any wish to know that some lower degree of happiness might somewhere or other be lying in store for the culprit.

Katherine, too utterly broken down by bitter reproaches to be able to move, was still standing where Mrs. Hackblock had left her, when she heard the sound of footsteps, and half hoped that her stern judge had returned to say one word of pity or forgiveness. Alas! no such feeling brought Mrs. Hackblock. What she had come to say was this:

‘It is half-past four; you had better go to your own room—that is, unless you are intending to see that person again. At half-past six I will send Watkins to pack your things, and at eight she will start for London with you. You will not see me in the morning, of course, or Mr. Hackblock either. It will be better for us never to

meet again. To-morrow, after your departure, Mr. Hackblock will write to your father, and give him our reasons for sending you back to him in this way.'

This, then, was the end—these friends of a lifetime were henceforth to be strangers to her! It was miserable to part so. Katherine made one last appeal. She followed Mrs. Hackblock to the foot of the stairs, and said:

'For pity's sake, say that you will try to forgive me, sometime!'

'It would be ridiculous for me to say anything of the kind! How could I do it? People are not expected to forgive such conduct as yours—no one ever does.'

'I am not entirely bad,' pleaded Katherine, 'and I shall be so unhappy unless you will say that you will try to forgive me.'

'You ought to be unhappy! You have made everyone else so. I'll say good-night to you, but I will do nothing more. Good night.' And so saying, Mrs. Hackblock departed, frigidly just to the last.

Katherine watched her walk slowly upstairs, and then followed her; but for more than an hour she heard her voice and Mr. Hackblock's, and trembled to think of the consequences of this night's work.

END OF VOL. I.

Hunt, Alfred W.

Self-condemned A Novel

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